ENGLISH RADICALISM 1786-1832

FROM PAINE TO COBBETT

BY
S. MACCOBY
M.A., Ph.D.

LONDON
George Allen & Unwin Ltd
MUSEUM STREET

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By the same author

ENGLISH RADICALISM
1762–1785

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1853–1886

ENGLISH RADICALISM
1886–1914

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TO MY WIFE

PREFACE

THIS volume completes a history of political agitation in this country from Wilkes's day to Lloyd George's which has occupied the writer for many years. If he has helped the occasional student of politics and society to chart himself through some of the obscurer side-channels of the national story, he will not consider his labour to have been altogether in vain. And as it is always hard to lay down a long course of study completely, the writer has begun some detailed work on the dissolution of the old Radicalism after 1914. It seemed a pity not to attempt to share, with those interested, the considerable quantity of fugitive material which he had steadily accumulated while writing the other volumes. And the inner story of the agitating elements of the British "Left", between 1914 and 1945, if it could ever be told with sufficient clarity and illustrated with the right kind of documentation, would seem almost the logical culmination of one hundred and fifty years of "Radical Reform".

In the matter of illustrative documentation, the writer knows that, while some have praised, others have questioned his very extensive use of extracts in these volumes. But the writer is one of those who prefer to have and to show a very solid backing indeed from a period's political literature before venturing a generalisation. Moreover, he understands the plight of many students, in this country as well as overseas, who may never have access to original material, or even the chance of becoming aware of its real character and content, unless indications and selections are supplied in some such way as he has chosen.

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PART ONE

CHAPTER I

REFORM BEFORE AND AFTER 1789

"In the last Session of Parliament [1785] the meritorious attempt of the Minister to improve our system of Popular Representation was not supported by the People themselves with that firmness and vigour which alone can afford a rational expectation of success. On that occasion, indeed, the County of York acted with its usual zeal and energy, neither exhausted by the great Political exertions it had made, during the five preceding years, nor discouraged by the formidable numbers which *a corrupt* or *a strangely prejudiced* majority of Parliament had opposed to every Proposition tending to Reform our Representation. In the same laudable pursuit... the County of Nottingham, and several respectable Cities and Towns concurred with the County of York. But the great mass of the Nation, instead of being animated by these examples, remained silent....

"Since the close of the last Session, I fear no favourable change in the disposition of the Nation has taken place. The Plan proposed by Mr. Pitt has indeed offered a new system of Representation... as near to theoretical perfection as in the actual state of property, public manners, and other material circumstances would be practicable, or perhaps desirable.... But... the various dangers and distresses in which the Corruption of Parliament has involved us... appear to be already forgotten... and the only wish of the Public seems to be, to enjoy the present gleam of prosperity, without considering the causes of our past misfortunes, and without taking the trouble to inquire by what means the far greater evils may be averted which those causes, if still suffered to exist, must ultimately produce...."

Intended Circular Letter to the Yorkshire Committee, January 8, 1786 (Rev. C. Wyvill).

"It is an article of some curiosity, to trace the sentiments of the British ministry on the subject of the French revolution. The spectacle that was exhibited in the outset, was that of a nation long broken to the galling yoke of despotism, that were at length become conscious of their rights, and struggled to be free. This spectacle could scarcely fail to be interesting to every upright and impartial mind; and Mr. Pitt who had commenced his political career under the standard of liberty and reform, might reasonably be expected to entertain some

sympathy for their exertions. Moderate men, as they were called, indulged the hope that France would model her government upon the system of the English constitution. . . . But, when it was seen that the French disdained to confine themselves to the imitation of any other people, and were rather ambitious to hold up a standard that should excite the desire of foreign countries, the case was extremely altered. That moderate temper, which at first dictated approbation, now began to conceive alarm. . . . No deliberation seemed to be more important than that which should determine the conduct to be pursued by government upon this interesting subject; whether means of gentleness and forbearance on the one hand, or those of violence and determined opposition on the other, would best prevent the contagion of republicanism and reform from spreading its infection among the people of England. The sentiments of Mr. Pitt . . . seem to be considerably favourable to the leaders in France; but it was sufficiently known that those sentiments were not unmixed with disapprobation, and the friends of the minister deemed themselves at liberty to speak. . . . Viscount Valletort, who had moved the address to the King upon the first day of the session, expressed great compassion for the present unhappy situation of France, of which, as he observed, no province was altogether free from anarchy and confusion; the most unexampled barbarities had been committed with impunity; families of distinction had been obliged to fly for an asylum to other countries; and, to conclude the distressing scene, the King himself was almost a prisoner. . . ."

The Oppositionist *New Annual Register*, 1790, pp. 73–4.

On December 17, 1786, the Rev. Christopher Wyvill, the Yorkshire landowner–parson, who had played so large a part in raising the Parliamentary Reform stir of 1780–2, confessed a feeling of deep depression to Earl Stanhope, an ally in the once-hopeful days when a "united Popular Party" had stood opposed to Lord North and the Court.[1] Wyvill was deeply mortified by the popular apathy that had succeeded the former excitements, for it had allowed a promising Reform motion to be beaten in 1785, after Pitt had been kept true to the pledges that he had given in 1781, 1782 and 1783 as a member of what Wyvill called the "Popular Party". Wyvill now saw a danger that the former "united Popular Party", already fatally split by the succession of Leadership disputes that had followed on the death of Lord Rockingham, would, by new quarrels, become broken up beyond all hope of repair. Earl Stanhope, for example, seemed much aggrieved that his brother-in-law Pitt, the Prime Minister, had not intervened with sufficient decision to save a County Voters Registration Bill which Stanhope had been pressing and which, by establishing a firm electoral register in advance of any election that might take place, was expected to eliminate much of the legal chicane and most of the overwhelming, and largely corrupt, expenditure attending a contested county election.[2] As Stanhope's Bill was, in fact, the ancestor of all modern Registration Bills and was devised to prepare the way for polling the county voter in his own parish instead of dragging him, normally at the candidate's expense, to the tumult and debauch of the election saturnalia at the county-town, Stanhope's chagrin at the defeats, which had been allowed to overtake his Bill in 1785 and 1786, is easily understood.

Stanhope's Bill contained, truth to tell, faults grave enough to permit its opponents, summarised by Wyvill as a "formidable coalition of the King's Friends and the Whig aristocracy", to secure its suspension less than a year after Pitt's ultimately decisive intervention had taken it to the Statute Book in 1788.[3] Wyvill, therefore, demonstrated very sound sense when, on December 17,

[1] *Wyvill Papers*, iv, 539.

[2] *Ibid.*, iv, 551–2 n. The expense of polling a county, especially a large county, was accepted as being so ruinous that the controlling groups of noblemen and gentry, even when divided by bitter party disputes, normally "arranged" the election without a poll. This was all very well for the controlling groups but naturally denied the average elector all voice in choosing his representatives.

[3] Cf. *New Annual Register*, 1788, p. 66, and *New Annual Register*, 1789, p.141. The period's District Polling suggestions also deserve attention.

1786, he begged Stanhope to consider some of the amendments which were being urged by men who were no enemies to the emancipation of the shire voter from the "influence" and wealth whether of "King's Friends" or Whig landlords. But he was, perhaps, on even stronger ground when begging the chagrined Stanhope to refrain from breaking with a Prime Minister who, in Stanhope's eyes, delayed the decisive intervention which was in his power. Wyvill's views on the general prospects of "political reformation", as they seemed at the end of 1786, will bear repeating at some length. Here are the relevant passages from his letter to Stanhope:[1]

It is but too evident, that the Party for Political Reformation is weak and dispirited, and without some accession of strength, from favourable events, its efforts are not likely to be attended with success, at least not to any great extent. In this situation, it seems to be our true policy to cultivate, as much as possible, a good understanding with those Friends to our measures who, from various Personal and Party motives, have yet given them but a faint and inefficient support, since the unfortunate separation of the Popular Party. Chance, which produced that division, may bring on a re-union; Personal and Party motives may cease to operate so extensively, or rather may take a new direction, and operate to our advantage; in a few years events may happen which are unforeseen at present, by which the Nation may be roused once more to a sense of its danger from the corruptions of Parliament; Mr. Pitt's Plan of Reformation may then be adopted as the measure of the United Popular Party; and in that case its success, either in the system, or in detail, cannot be very remote.

But if time is not to produce those fortunate events, during the present age, it is still of the utmost consequence to prevent the farther subdivision of the Friends of Political Reformation. I most particularly deprecate a rupture between your Lordship and Mr. Pitt. In his attempt to reform our Representation he was ill supported in Parliament, and most shamefully deserted by the majority of those Counties who had so loudly demanded that Reformation. It would be unjust, I think, to charge him with insincerity, either because he did not carry the great question, or because, having lost it, he did not instantly resign. On the contrary, I trust, his conduct, in retaining his situation, will prove ultimately beneficial to the cause. I even entertain fresh hopes of succeeding so far by his assistance, as that we may gain your Lordship's County-Election Bill, under certain modifications, and also several other points of great importance, as subsidiary parts of the system.

This was perspicacious thinking, and none the less so because Wyvill failed to foresee what might be the full political effects of

[1] *Wyvill Papers*, iv, 541–2.

such approaching and yet "unforeseen events" as the French Revolution. Many fresh forces were stirring in a singularly active, powerful and wealthy nation, and some of them, like the new manufacturers, had just made a display of their strength when helping the Opposition to defeat Pitt's Irish Trade proposals of 1785 and then declining, for the most part, to play Opposition's game again in 1786 either on the new Sinking Fund or the French Commercial Treaty.[1] In the long run, of course, the new manufacturers were among the strongest of the forces making for a "political reformation" likely to increase the weight of "industry" in Parliament. But, for the time being, they normally had enough to do to direct their still highly speculative enterprises and, if a Robert Peel was to venture into Parliament as early as 1790, it would be for the purchasable borough of Tamworth and as a Government supporter, destined to distinguish himself among the foes of "French revolutionary doctrines". Another force, normally destined in after-years to enlist under the banner of "political reformation", was that considerable part of the British "public", moved to anger by the spectacle of systematic and habitual oppression of weaker races. But, in 1786, Opposition, though taking the initiative against Warren Hastings's alleged misgovernment in India, was allowed no monopoly in the determination that justice should be done. And, if in 1787 and 1788, the local and central Committees, arising to direct the astonishing "movement" for the Abolition of the Slave Trade, were to create many of the precedents for later systematic "agitation",[2] it is none the less true that the "movement's" first Parliamentary spokesmen were the High Tory, Sir William Dolben, and that special friend of the Pitt Government, William Wilberforce.

[1] Cf. *New Annual Register*, 1787, pp. 48–76.

[2] Cf. Thomas Clarkson, *The History of the Rise, Progress, and Accomplishment of the Abolition of the African Slave Trade by the British Parliament* (1808). Here is one extract from ii 7, showing how fascinatingly comparable some of the local Committees were to those that directed the "Radical agitations" of the nineteenth century: "At Plymouth I laid the foundation of another committee. The late William Cookworthy, the late John Prideaux, and James Fox, all of the Society of the Quakers, and Mr. George Leach, Samuel Northcote, and John Saunders, had a principal share in forming it. Sir William Ellford was chosen chairman. From Plymouth I [Clarkson] journeyed on to Falmouth, and from thence to Exeter, where having meetings with the late Mr. Samuel Milford, the late Mr. George Manning, Thomas Sparkes and others, a desire became manifest among them of establishing a committee there. This was afterwards effected; and Mr. Milford, who, at a general meeting of the inhabitants of Exeter, on the tenth of June, on this great subject, had been called by those present to the chair, was appointed the chairman of it. . . ."

It is to return to the more immediate questions of "political reformation", as discussed by the Parliamentarians of the years 1785–9, to notice that both Ireland and Scotland had their parts in the debate. Ireland had a Parliamentary Reform movement of its own which, if temporarily done to death in the scandalously unrepresentative Irish Parliament of 1785,[1] only gave Grattan the greater claim to urge on Tithe reforms, designed to prevent future anti-Church outbreaks like those of 1786, and Place and Pension Bills, calculated to make a beginning with the purification of Irish politics. Another critical "patriot" demand for which there was scant welcome from London's successive Lord-Lieutenants at Dublin Castle was that claiming that the high officers of State should acknowledge responsibility to the Irish Parliament as well as to the Irish Crown. All in all, it is not surprising to find Grattan, during George III's incapacity of 1788–9, persuading the Irish Parliament to acknowledge the Prince of Wales's automatic Regency in a manner calculated to help that Prince's Opposition friends in London to overthrow Pitt.[2] And if Scotland in the absence of a Scottish Parliament, was unable, like Ireland, to voice its discontents in a manner likely to affect the central battle of "Ins versus Outs" at Westminster, "independent" Scotsmen had nevertheless succeeded in organising a remarkable movement for Burgh Reform. The day of self-renewing Burgh Councils, owning no responsibility to the Burgesses for their management of Burgh jurisdiction and property, their co-option of Burgh Councillors to fill up vancancies, and their choice of Burgh representatives in Parliament, must certainly have seemed to be ending to such as read, say, the *Minutes of the Convention met—at Edinburgh, the 20th day of August 1788*, "this being the day appointed for holding the Annual Convention of Delegates, from the Burgesses of the Boroughs associated for Reform——."[3] But though local

[1] Cf. *New Annual Register*, 1786, Chapter I, for a not unsympathetic account of "how the last efforts were now expended of that glorious flame, which had once spread over every part of the island, and which had seemed to promise a very different and distinguished success". Apparently "respectable" Protestant opinion in Ireland had now dubbed the Reform efforts, specially forwarded by the Ulster Dissenters, as so "republican" that Grattan left the Parliamentary lead in the matter to Flood and all that Flood ventured to ask was that no borough in Connaught, having less than forty electors, and no borough in the other three provinces, having less than seventy electors, should return more than one member. Such ideas were negatived in a later division by 112 votes against 60.

[2] Cf. *Ibid.*, 1789, Public Papers, pp. 76–83.

[3] The *Minutes*, in their printed form, run to considerable volume and make a good impression by their sobriety and care. This is specially true of the long

movements were reported in fifty-two burghs, nearly all of whom sent Delegates to the Convention or petitions to Parliament; though the Edinburgh and London Committees were warmly congratulated on having secured the ear of Parliament despite the hostility of the Burgh Councils and the constitutional position of their General Convention, optimism proved unjustified, and Burgh Reform, was in fact delayed, by a strange variety of chances, until 1833.

There was one subject which had something of the prime constitutional importance in England that Burgh Reform had in Scotland. This is not a reference to the partisan disputes on the Regency that broke out on the occasion of George III's temporary insanity and found the disputants exchanging roles, the Whig Opposition becoming, for the nonce, the patrons of the Prince of Wales's absolute and immediate Regency rights while George III's Ministers contended for special limiting powers for Parliament. From the tremendous Thanksgiving celebrations that followed George III's recovery in March 1789 before the Regency could be instituted,[1] it must be assumed that, in the eyes of the "respectable", Fox lost more ground to Pitt. There had been too much eagerness, it was held, to put the Royal prerogatives, immediately and without limit, into the hands of an extravagant young debauchee, already suspected of sins against the Act of Settlement[2] and capable, some believed, of speedily dismissing his father's Government and quickly dissipating his father's great private

Appendix attached, whose refutation of opponents to Burgh Reform, must have been the work of a team of the Advocates whom the Burgh Councils blamed for raising the agitation.

[1] Cf. *New Annual Register*, 1789, Principal Occurrences under March and April. "The most general and splendid illuminations ever remembered" are mentioned a first time in March immediately after the news of the King's recovery had become public, and these were apparently exceeded in April, on the occasion of the official Thanksgiving celebrations.

[2] Cf. *Ibid.*, 1787, pp. 115–16: "In the great contest between Mr. Pitt and Mr. Fox in the close of the last parliament, undoubtedly there was many considerations, that co-operated with each other for the purpose of giving so entire a victory to the former. But of all these motives perhaps the most cogent was that, which was derived from the sobriety and purity of Mr. Pitt's conduct, and from the known dissipation and propensity to gaming of Mr. Fox. It is equally true . . . that nothing has tended to carry the present sovereign, in safety through all the storms and calamities of his reign, more than his perfect freedom from every irregular and vicious pursuit. The contrast in this respect between the prince upon the throne and his apparent successor, was by no means favourable to the latter. There was scarcely any deviation in which the prince did not occasionally indulge. . . . All these considerations were tenfold strengthened, by the affair of the supposed marriage with Mrs. Fitzherbert [a Catholic]."

fortune.[1] But the whole Regency dispute that raged so fiercely from December 1788 to February 1789 has not the slightest claim to figure in a history of "political reformation" whereas a very definite place has to be found in it for the pertinacious Dissenting campaign against the Test and Corporation Acts which, though begun years before the French Revolution, grew more alarming to Conservatives after that revolution had broken out. Of this campaign it is necessary to say something here.

English Dissenters, of course, had a long history of effort against Acts which theoretically deprived them of the right to corporation office and government place. The Acts had long since ceased to be enforced or enforceable as against the Protestant Dissenters but these rightly held that, so long as they were on the Statute Book, effective citizenship was legally confined to communicants of the Church of England. Possessing a traditional organisation, for making joint representations, in the London Deputies of the Three Denominations,[2] the Dissenters used it for preparing their widely distributed pamphlet, *The Case of the Protestant Dissenters with Reference to the Corporation and Test Acts*,[3] and for arranging, through sympathetic Parliamentarians,[4] the consideration of their grievances by the House of Commons. It seems plain that the bulk of the aggrieved Dissenters belonged to the trading classes, and that those classes still showed the same high proportion of chapel-going that had given so much anxiety to the Church earlier in the century. And it would appear from the arguments used by Mr. Henry Beaufoy when, on March 28, 1787, he moved, on behalf of the Dissenters, that the House should go into Committee on the Test and Corporation Acts, that he considered it essential to defend the Dissenters from the old charge of "republicanism" which had apparently survived from the days of the Commonwealth and the

[1] The savings from the Royal and Electoral incomes had made the size of the Hanoverian monarchs' private fortunes a matter of British and continental gossip since 1720. George III's wealth and alleged tightfistedness became, indeed, one of the main themes of the reign's poetical satirist, the self-styled Peter Pindar.

[2] Cf. *Gentleman's Magazine*, March 1787, for its report of the "General Meeting of the Deputies of the three denominations of Dissenters held at Dr. Williams's Library" on January 5, 1787. The Three Denominations were Independents (Congregationalists), Presbyterians and Baptists.

[3] Reproduced in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, March 1787, pp. 238–40.

[4] Only one M.P., presumably a Dissenter, was on the original Committee appointed by the Deputies but, when the Committee was enlarged, eleven more M.P.s were added though nearly all of them are recognisable as sympathisers rather than adherents.

Restoration. Beaufoy disclaimed, for the Dissenters, both "levelling principles" and "republican attachments" and denied also any design against the Church of England's endowments which he thought, would be safer once the Dissenters' claims had been met. Only their sense of grievance, he declared, had united the different bodies of Protestant Dissenters in common action, and once that sense of grievance had been removed, the common action would end too.[1]

Despite Beaufoy's assurances, Lord North, though now blind, considered it his duty, as Chancellor of Oxford Univertsiy, to rise and announce the universal alarm of the Church, and Pitt, too, showed that the fears of the clergy had been communicated to him. While giving general praise to the Dissenters, the Prime Minister declared that there were some amongst them who opposed all Church establishment and those, he thought, might aim at a control of corporations and, so, of Parliamentary seats, with an ultimate view to putting their principles into effect and demolishing the Church. The motion was eventually rejected by 178 votes against 100[2] though Fox, who had supported it, urged that further persevering applications "could not fail of success".

It had emerged during the debate of March 28, 1787, that there was a conservative section of the House that distrusted many of the easy conclusions that had been drawn from the alleged "moderation" of the Dissenters of the day. Few Dissenters were better known than the preacher-scientist, Dr. Joseph Priestley, and an extract from his pamphlets had been read to the House to illustrate how revolutionary the ultimate aims of the Dissenters might really be.[3] In such circumstances, it was certainly unwise

[1] Cf. *New Annual Register*, 1787, p. 104: "Mr. Beaufoy added, that the repeal of the test act, so far from being pernicious to the established church, would be salutary. The different classes of dissenters had no general interest, no bond of union, but that reproachful exclusion from public employments which was common to them all. . . ." Mr. Beaufoy's speech, it may be mentioned, varies considerably in the different reports. The *Gentleman's Magazine* has, for example, considerable variations from the *New Annual Register*'s longer report.

[2] Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 108. The *Gentleman's Magazine* figures for the division were 176 against 98, and these doubtless allowed for the deduction of the tellers on either side.

[3] Cf. *Ibid.*, "Sir William Dolben warmly opposed the motion; and in order to show how unjustly a spirit of moderation had been ascribed to the dissenters of the present day, read a passage from a pamphlet of Dr. Joseph Priestley, in which it was observed, 'that their silent propagation of the truth would in the end prove efficacious. They were wisely placing, as it were grain by grain, a train of gunpowder, to which the match would one day be laid to blow up the fabric of error. . . .'"

for Dr. Priestley to dash in to print with a reprimand to Pitt and an indication of all the demands that might be made from the Dissenting side.[1] One opponent to abolition of the Test extracted from Priestley's *Letter to Mr. Pitt* evidence that the preacher desired, over and above corporation and government office for Dissenters:[2]

> ... a repeal of the act of William III against blasphemy, and all other penal laws in matters of religion, and the solemnisation of marriage by the Dissenting ministers, that *they* may *receive the fees*. These are the things which the Minister [Pitt] is to do *for* the *Dissenters*. Next follows what he is to do *against* the *Establishment*—to confine it to *Christianity itself*, by purging out all the New Testament Christianity, and substituting that of the author of *The History of the Corruptions of Christianity*, by letting Unitarians avow their principles ... by abolishing subscriptions in the *stagnant pools* called Universities, by turning the Bishops out of the House of Lords, and of course setting up an *Assembly of Divines*, and by abolishing tythes, and leaving the clergy as much at the mercy of their congregations as the dissenting ministry are....

And as if to strengthen the case for conservatism and for official refusal to budge an inch from a position, which, if abandoned, allowed all manner of perplexing and alarming claims to be put forward, there had stepped into the arena a gifted Catholic priest, the Rev. Joseph Berington. In making their application for repeal of the Test, the Dissenters had asked it on their own account only and had explicitly recognised the "justice" of continuing a test designed to exclude Catholics. Berington now averred that the constitutional principles of eighteenth-century Catholics were so unimpeachable as to make their continued exclusion from all political rights a good deal less defensible than exclusion of the Dissenters.[3]

Even if the Deputies of the Three Denominations had been discouraged by the fate of their 1787 application to Parliament, events took place of a nature to re-awaken their hopes. 1788 was the

[1] Dr. Priestley's pamphlet was entitled, *A Letter to the Right Honourable William Pitt ... on the Subjects of Toleration and Church Establishment, occasioned by his Speech against the Repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts....*

[2] Cf. *Gentleman's Magazine*, May 1787, p. 423, for a stinging review.

[3] Berington's pamphlet was called *An Address to the Protestant Dissenters who have lately petitioned for a Repeal of the Corporation and Test Acts.* The reviewer of the *Gentleman's Magazine* agreed with Mr. B. ("if his account of the principles of the Roman Catholics of the present day be a fair and true one") in "thinking their tenets far less inimical, both to our church and state, than those of the *dissenting brethren*".

centenary year of the English Revolution, and though conservative quarters, too, felt justified in commemorating the salvation of the Churches of England and Scotland,[1] the centenary celebrations offered special opportunities to Dissenters and Opposition Whigs. The Dissenters, for example, could stress that so long as a hundred years before, the Orange "hero" had seen the policy of making full citizens of them, while Whigs could proudly point to the happy results that had followed after the Whigs of 1688 had asserted the freeman's right to revolt against oppression. The considerable scale and importance of the Revolution celebrations may here be indicated by one short quotation from the *New Annual Register*'s account of events on November 5, 1788. Under that date, this is to be read:[2]

> Yesterday being the birth-day of king William III, and this day the anniversary of his landing, the centenary of the Revolution of 1688 was observed by many societies in London, and other parts of the kingdom, not only with festivity, but with devotion and thanksgiving. At the dinner at the London Tavern yesterday, earl Stanhope, the chairman, moved, that an application be made to parliament, to observe the future anniversary of the 16th of December, as a day of solemn thanksgiving, it being on that day 1689, that the Bill of Rights was passed; it was agreed to; and at the Whig Club, at the Crown and Anchor Tavern, a subscription of 1500 l. was raised, towards erecting a column in Runnemede, in commemoration. . . .

There were other things to stimulate the Dissenters to renewed exertions. France, for example, had already begun to supply encouragement to the friends of "liberty", and the rumour that the French Crown might itself renew the Edict of Nantes and full civic rights for Protestants had been in circulation since 1787.[3] In the midst, therefore, of the excitements of the Regency dispute a further application to Parliament was prepared by the Dissenters, and on May 8, 1789 Mr. Henry Beaufoy once again introduced their grievances to the House. Fox made a more decided speech in the Dissenters' favour than he had done in 1787 and, in his

[1] Cf. *New Annual Register*, 1787, Principal Occurrences under May 30th: "The general assembly of the church of Scotland, by an act passed yesterday, have appointed the fifth day of November, in the present year, to be observed within the bounds of their national church as a day of solemn thanksgiving, in commemoration of the Revolution in 1688. . . ."

[2] *Ibid.*, Principal Occurrences, pp. 48–9.

[3] Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 104, for Mr. Beaufoy saying in Parliament: "that edict, it was reported, was about to be revived".

readiness to consider even the Catholic case, showed, perhaps, the influence beginning to be exerted by Berington's "liberal" arguments on the Catholics' behalf.[1] And here is what one well-known Review wrote, in comment, on a printed report of the debate:[2]

A very important question, ably argued on both sides. The division of the house, on this occasion, was so nearly equal, that it affords the Dissenters great encouragement to renew their application: which, we hear, they intend. Although the minister was against them, the majority for continuing the Test was but 20, out of 224 members who voted.

During the summer and autumn of 1789 the English "public" began to suspect that epoch-making events were taking place in France. Details were eagerly sought of the "wonderful Revolution at Paris",[3] and there was almost universal satisfaction at the fall of the Bastille.[4] But it was some time before there was any real suggestion that the course of events in France had any political lessons for England. The "public's" attitude was rather one of friendly condescension to a people who were presumed to be following, very belatedly, Britain's example of "liberty" and who would, for long, be pupils rather than teachers.[5] And one writer, author of some of the friendliest of the early verses on *Gallic Liberty*, thought it necessary to guard in advance against the danger that British hostility to the Revolution would be excited as soon as the prospect of its stimulating greater French commercial activity was perceived. His preface, indeed, is well worth

[1] Cf. The *Monthly Review*, August 1789, pp. 146–53, for a long notice and extensive quotations from Berington's new work entitled, *The Rights of Dissenters from the Established Church, in relation, principally to the English Catholics*. The notice begins thus: "This is a work that will attract attention. When we find a professor of an intolerant religion pleading the cause of Dissenters on principles of liberality, such an instance will appear as a respectable phenomenon; and we shall rejoice, either at the reformation of a church . . . or that British Catholics understand the rights of human nature better than their continental brethren. In either case, our penal laws ought to alter with them; but . . . there must be time for suspicion to wear out, and for confidence to succeed. . . ."

[2] *Ibid.*, July 1789, p. 90.

[3] Cf. *Tyranny Annihilated; or, the Triumph of Freedom over Despotism. Containing a particular Account of the Rise, Progress, and various Incidents which produced the late grand and memorable Revolution in the Government of France.*

[4] Cf. *Monthly Review*, September 1789, p. 275, for this Review's somewhat uncritical acceptance of the Bastille as "one of the most horrid prisons in the world".

[5] Cf. F. A. Wenderborn's, *A View of England towards the Close of the Eighteenth Century* (English ed. 1790) for this acute and long-resident German on the average Englishman's idea of his essential superiority over foreigners.

quoting as exemplifying much typical British thinking on the first stages of the Revolution. Commercial even more than political considerations are evident in such a passage as this:[1]

> The Revolution in France is one of the most extraordinary and important events that has happened in the present century. In its consequences, it may prove very interesting to Britain. Accordingly, many persons are inclined to form conjectures concerning them. The author . . . sees things in a favourable light. By the freedom of France a great number of persons, there at present, will have rank in the middle station of life; and will acquire considerable wealth. There will, therefore, be a greater demand for the manufactures and products of Britain. It is in vain to say, that the French will, in France, have such manufactures as they need. Many circumstances, respecting fuel, water, and soil, must for ever render it necessary for them to have supplies from England. Add to this, that it is highly probable their views will not be so much directed, as they formerly were, to conquest. The desire of territory is the passion of Kings.

The first open expressions of dislike and apprehension at what was happening in France did not, in fact, occur until after the ugly business at Versailles on October 6th[2] and were even then, for the most part, charitable enough to Frenchmen as a whole. Meanwhile English Dissenters, methodically preparing for a new application to Parliament in 1790,[3] fixed their gaze, not on the "excesses of the mob" of Paris but on the complete emancipation of all religious minorities that the French National Assembly had resolved upon. Tithes, too, had been abolished, and on November 2nd the National Assembly proceeded to that tempting "nationalisation" of all Church property which permitted the issue of the first assignats on December 17th and, so allowed a further postponement of the unpleasant necessity of decreeing unpopular new taxes.

A series of such events across the Channel was, of course, calculated to heighten all the Church fears that had been so influential in procuring the rejection of the Dissenters' applications to Parliament in 1787 and 1789. And when the leading Dissenting

[1] *Gallic Liberty. A poem, occasioned by the Revolution in France.*

[2] Cf. *Blair's Chronological Tables, etc.* (Bohn ed.) under October 6th: "the mob proceeds to Versailles, attacks the palace and massacres the guards; the king and the royal family brought to Paris. . . ."

[3] At meetings like those which provoked the two pamphlets, *A Letter addressed to the Delegates from the several Congregations of Protestant Dissenters who met at Devizes, on September 14, 1789* and *A Second Letter, addressed to the Delegates*, etc.

preacher, Dr. Richard Price, delivered, on November 4th, a soon notorious *Discourse on the Love of our Country* to the "Society for commemorating the Revolution in Great Britain" he only sharpened those fears. Price was the senior member of a remarkable group of Dissenting preachers, whose scholarship seemed at least equal to most that the Church could show and whose literary industry had been so much greater that it often appeared to have taken command of "enlightened opinion."[1] Price himself had the incisive way of thinking and writing which had already, in some earlier crises, raised him to national importance as a partisan of "liberty". In 1776 he had supported the Americans in a famous pamphlet, which had had an immense sale, and in 1780 he and Horne Tooke had combined to produce another pamphlet that had fortified Opposition at a critical stage of its struggle against the Court.[2] Now, in his *Discourse on the Love of our Country*, he produced a further work which, in pamphlet form, enjoyed a great sale and provoked extensive discussion.[3] Price, of course, praised the English Revolution of 1688 but held that its work was never completed since there was still a Test Act to restrict "liberty of conscience" and still a Parliamentary system that allowed the nation to be politically misrepresented. More irritating to conservative Englishmen even than such alleged incitements against the British Constitution was the enthusiasm displayed by

[1] Price's own writing had begun as far back as 1758 with a philosophic work entitled, *A Review of the Principal Questions and Difficulties in Morals*, which had acquired a high reputation. Later he had gone on to establish himself firmly in the fields of financial and political writing. Priestley, of course, shewed equal versatility and even greater productivity, and there were others who, though they are half-forgotten today, ranked high in the world of letters of their time. Dr. Joseph Towers, for example, was editor of the *British Biography* of 1766–72 and joint-editor of the later *Biographia Britannica* of 1778–93 while Dr. Andrew Kippis, besides being prominently associated with this latter work, was one of the leading contributors to the *New Annual Register*, the *Monthly Review* and the *Gentleman's Magazine*. Such intense literary labours as those referred to above are, of course, impossible unless those who undertake them have something genuine to say. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that, in contrast to the clergyman of the Established Church, the Dissenting minister of the eighteenth century could only win general notice (and added income) through his pen.

[2] Cf. S. A. Allibone, *A Critical Dictionary of English Literature*, ii, 1678–9. The pamphlet of 1776 was *Observations on the Nature of Civil Liberty, the Principles of Government, and the Justice and Policy of the War with America; to which is added an Appendix, containing a State of the National Debt.* The pamphlet contained 128 pages and 60,000 copies were sold in a few months. The title of the 1780 pamphlet was *Facts addressed to the Landholders*, and "7 or 8 editions in a few weeks" were reported.

[3] Cf. *Critical Review*, January 1790, pp. 68–9, on the "uncommon demand for this Discourse" and the fact that it was "the object of unusual attention".

Dr. Price for the American and French Revolutions. It was a further offence that Dr. Price had appeared ready to go out of his way, whether to belittle the British Monarchy or magnify the population of France.[1]

Events were to prove that Price's *Discourse* was the first shot in an ideological battle that lasted for years. Attentive examination would show, for instance, its part in goading Burke into flaming hostility in 1790 and in leading Paine, in 1791, towards his plan for a Triple Alliance of Britain, France and America on a revolutionary basis. But the first results of the *Discourse* seem to have been to set every alarmed conservative pen to reproaching or abusing its Dissenting author and to admonishing Parliament to reject the new application against the Test that the Dissenters were preparing.[2] Here is some writing from one of the Dissenters' weightier opponents:[3]

There is a general and vehement bustle, about this time, among the Dissenters throughout the kingdom. We hear of nothing but their *right* to places of trust and profit; of the *hardships* they endure, of the *persecution* they suffer, of the *slavery* they undergo, in being kept out of them. *Delegates* are hastening together, from the East and from the West, from the North and the South; and a TEST is every where establishing by them, to exclude from a seat in Parliament every person who will not promise to vote as they would have him upon this important question. . . .

Let not the friends of the Church be deceived by fair speeches. The signs of the times, and the principles that are stirring among us, are by no means such as to encourage us to dismantle our fortifications, but rather admonish us to see that they be kept in thorough repair, and

[1] Cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 71–5: "Dr. Price speaks of the kingly power as a delegated one. If, in these passages, he gives abstract, speculative propositions, which, like the social contract, never were, or can be reduced to practice, we would not oppose them. But, if he means to apply them to our own country, it is necessary to observe, that they convey false ideas, and may probably have a dangerous tendency. . . . In England our constitution has given them [kings] *not* a delegated but a separate power. . . . We need not tell Dr. Price that the King is one member of the legislature; that the people are another; and that the aristocracy forms the third. . . . The political tendency of increasing the population of France we cannot perceive; but we find it connected with a wish to depreciate the character, the population, and the resources of England. . . ."

[2] Cf. *Gentleman's Magazine*, January, February, March and April 1790, for a large number of pamphlet reviews. One pamphlet, *Test against Test*, quoted from the resolutions of the Dissenters of Devonshire, Devizes, Manchester, Suffolk, Cambridge, London, Warrington, Lancashire and Cheshire, Somerset and Bolton to shew how special pressure was being applied to members of Parliament.

[3] *Observations on the Case of the Protestant Dissenters.*

doubly manned. Since last year, a re-inforcement of *reasons for laying all things open* has been imported from France; and we are reproached with falling so far short of the *liberality of sentiment* displayed in that kingdom. I love liberty as well as any man, but not that particular species of it which allows only seven minutes to prepare for death, before one is hanged up by fish-women at a lamp-iron: and though superstition be a very bad thing, I hope never to see the BRITISH *National Assembly* possessed by the spirit of VOLTAIRE.

It would, perhaps, be well to show from a second example the stage that discussion of the French Revolution had reached when the Parliament of 1784 was gathered on January 21, 1790 for its last Session. The most contentious business before Parliament was, of course, the Dissenters' renewed application against the Test Acts, and the French Revolution made its main appearance in the pamphlets when impatient pamphleteers were dealing with the "absurdity of appeal to the French Revolution, where no system is yet settled, no experiment [experience] has been tried".[1] According to one effective pamphleteer against the Dissenters:[2]

When it shall appear that any plans have been carried into execution by the National Assembly for preventing a general bankruptcy, or securing an honourable and permanent payment of their debts, for guarding against a famine which must ensue while the peasantry are taken off from their proper callings, and, we may add, for ensuring the peace and safety of individuals and the publick, then let us pronounce the Revolution in France permanent and useful: but let us not suffer ourselves to be dazzled by plans, propositions, and resolutions, which do not reach beyond words, and have as little efficacy as the resolutions of our constitutional and other patriotic societies, or the unconnected axioms they adopt from theoretical writers.

The Parliament of 1784 was not in the least likely to be "dazzled" by what was plainly making an increasing appeal to those elements in the country whose "constitutional and other patriotic societies" had more than once, in the past generation, played a leading part in politics.

[1] From *The Danger of repealing the Test Act; in a Letter to a Member of Parliament, from a Country Freeholder.*
[2] *Ibid.*

CHAPTER II

TAKING SIDES ON THE FRENCH REVOLUTION, 1790

"In the last age we were in danger of being entangled by the example of France in the net of a relentless despotism. It is not necessary to say anything upon that example. It exists no longer. Our present danger from the example of a people whose character knows no medium, is, with regard to government, a danger from anarchy; a danger of being led through an admiration of successful fraud and violence, to an imitation of the excesses of an irrational, unprincipled, proscribing, confiscating, plundering, ferocious, bloody, and tyrannical democracy. On the side of religion, the danger of their example is no longer from intolerance, but from atheism . . . which seems, in France, for a long time, to have been embodied into a faction, accredited, and almost avowed.

"These are our present dangers from France; but, in his opinion, the very worst part of the example set is, in the late assumption of citizenship by the army. . . . He was sorry that his right honourable friend [Mr. Fox] had dropped even a word expressive of exultation on that circumstance; or that he seemed of opinion that the objection from standing armies was at all lessened by it. He attributed this opinion of Mr. Fox entirely to his own known zeal for the best of all causes, liberty. . . . The house must perceive, from his coming forward to mark an expression or two of his best friend, how anxious he was to keep the distemper of France from the least countenance in England, where he was sure some wicked persons had shown a strong disposition to recommend an imitation of the French spirit of reform."

Edmund Burke in the Commons, February 9, 1790.

"We cannot avoid expressing our surprize and concern that we should so often be reproachfully branded with the name of Republicans. If there be any meaning in this term, as malignantly applied to us by our enemies, it must be intended to denote, that we wish to overturn the present constitution, and to establish a republick on the ruins of the monarchical part of our government. But every imputation of this kind we absolutely disclaim and deny. The Dissenters in no sense deserve the appellation of Republicans, but in common with all the people of the kingdom, that is, in opposition to arbitrary power. . . .

"But the grand topick of declamation on the present occasion is the danger that would ensue to the Church from the repeal of the Sacramental Test Laws. The unjust and ill-founded alarm excited on this head has revived the unchristian spirit of those bigoted times which disgrace the annals of our country. It is astonishing that the publick, in this enlightened age, could have been influenced by such an idle phantom.... The time will speedily arrive, when a generous nation, that of late has been misled by false alarms, and insidious and bigoted misrepresentations, shall return to calmer feelings.... A restoration to our rights must necessarily result from the progress of truth, justice and sound policy. Great Britain... will not permit herself to be exceeded by other countries in the regards which are due to the rights of men and of citizens...."

From *The Address to the People of England from the Committee of Protestant Dissenters* (May 14, 1790).

THE first Parliamentary discussion of the issues that had been raised by the French Revolution seems to have taken place on the introduction of the Army Estimates on February 5, 1790. A private member considered the Estimates too high, and Pitt hinted both at the French Revolution and at the Belgian disturbances as reasons for refraining from Army reductions. And then Fox, while suggesting that Britain's diplomatic position was strong enough to make reductions possible, was drawn on to a friendly *obiter dictum* on the Revolutionary soldiery of France. Whatever might have been the case in the past, France's experience of 1789, he claimed, had shown that men, by becoming soldiers, did not lose the feelings and sentiments of citizens. A Colonel Phipps, the next speaker, reproved Fox for his implied praise of the anarchy, cruelty and rebellion into which French soldiers had plunged in 1789. He held that Fox would have done better to praise the British troops who had shown such discipline and self-control in executing their orders from the civil power during the dangerous Gordon Riots of 1780. There were further exchanges. Lord Fielding, the Earl of Denbigh's heir, rose to support Fox, to praise the Revolutionary troops, and to trust that their example would be followed in England if ministers dared to encroach upon the rights of the people. And to Lord Fielding it was retorted that Revolutionary troops had not only overawed the King but the National Assembly as well.[1]

These exchanges, had, of course, little importance in themselves but they are worth recording because they induced Burke to make a famous appearance and a famous speech at the next stage of the Army Estimates. On Tuesday, February 9th, having already announced that he would oppose a Parliamentary Reform motion of which Henry Flood had given notice,[2] Burke intervened on the Report stage of the Army Estimates. He began by differing from Pitt on the matter of Army reductions and claimed, in fact, that, with France virtually eliminated, for the time, as a factor in the Balance of Power, some decrease of Army expenditure was possible. There followed some very strongly-expressed views on the chaos

[1] Cf. *Gentleman's Magazine*, February 1790, pp. 137–8.

[2] Cf. *Ibid.*, Parliamentary Proceedings, under February 9th: "Mr. Burke rose to assure the House, that, whenever the Hon. Gent. should make his intended motion, he should oppose it. He deprecated the introduction into this kingdom [of] the wild spirit of Reformation that was let loose on the Continent. . . ."

which the French Revolution was alleged to have brought, not only into the discipline of the French Army, but into all departments of French life. These views made an instant impression inside and outside the House and render it justifiable to undertake some quotation from Burke's speech:[1]

"The French," said Burke, "had shown themselves the ablest architects of ruin that had hitherto existed in the world . . . they had completely pulled down to the ground their monarchy; their church; their nobility; their law; their revenue; their army; their navy; their commerce; their arts; and their manufactures. They had done their business for us as rivals, in a way in which twenty Ramilies or Blenheims could never have done it. Were we absolute conquerors, and France to lie prostrate at our feet, we should be ashamed to send a commission to settle their affairs, which could impose so hard a law upon the French, and so destructive of all their consequence as a nation. . . .

"They had gloried (and some people in England had thought fit to take share in that glory) in making a revolution; as if revolutions were good things in themselves. All the horrors, and all the crimes of the anarchy which led to their revolution, which attend its progress, and which may virtually attend it in its establishment, pass for nothing with the lovers of revolutions . . . if they should perfectly succeed in what they propose, as they are likely enough to do, and establish a democracy, or a mob of democracies, in a country circumstanced like France, they will establish a very bad government—a very bad species of tyranny.

"The worst effect of all their proceeding was on their military . . . what was done there furnished no matter of exultation, either in the act or the example. . . . It was not an army in corps and with discipline, and embodied under the respectable patriot citizens of the state in resisting tyranny. Nothing like it. It was the case of common soldiers deserting from their officers, to join a furious, licentious populace. . . . He wished the house to consider, how the members would like to have their mansions pulled down and pillaged, their persons abused, insulted and destroyed; their title-deeds brought out and burned before their faces, and their families driven to seek refuge in every nation throughout Europe. . . . The desertion in France was to aid an abominable . . . sedition. . . ."

It seems plain that Burke's speech marked a turning-point in the history of upper-class sentiment towards the French Revolution. A century of political rivalry with the Bourbon monarchy and a century of rather one-sided criticism of the intolerance of the French Catholic hierarchy had ensured a universal welcome in England to the first changes of 1789. Now Burke had helped the

[1] From James Burke's edition of *Burke's Speeches.*

propertied classes, at least, to show good reason for criticising everything that had been done in France since the first assembly of the Estates General in May 1789. Fox, who had received from Burke high praise as well as indirect reproof,[1] sensed, perhaps, the importance of the occasion and could hardly have been indifferent to Burke's declared readiness "to abandon his best friends and join with his worst enemies" rather than allow the principles of the French Revolution to be imitated in Britain. Certainly Fox's reply to Burke, if still defending the French soldiery's right to feel as citizens, was most conciliatory in tone and most friendly in temper. In this it differed markedly from that of another Opposition colleague of Burke's, Sheridan, who charged Burke with having that day proved himself a supporter of despotism and a libeller of men exerting themselves in the cause of freedom. After Sheridan had gone on to pronounce the French Revolution a glorious struggle for liberty and to wish the French every success, Parliament was destined to undergo another sensation. Burke announced that, though he had apprehended that the affairs of France would lead to a separation of many in the House who had generally acted together, he had not suspected that such language would be used of him as Sheridan had uttered. Thenceforward Sheridan and he were separated in politics for ever. Nor was this yet the end of sensations. Pitt rose to compliment Burke on his clarification of the principles of Britain's "truly happy Constitution" and to declare that, however he might have differed from Burke in the past, he now felt that the country ought, for ever, gratefully to revere Burke's name. This was an astonishing measure of praise from Pitt, and its re-echoing by Colonel Phipps and Sir George Howard is only another proof of the remarkable impression Burke had made on the Government side of the House.[2]

But, meanwhile, a struggle, doubtless minor in principle to that on the fundamentals of the French Revolution, had been for months proceeding between the pamphleteers on the rights and wrongs of the Dissenters' new efforts against the Test and Corporation Acts. Indeed, pamphlets, mainly on the Church side of this debate, seem well nigh to have monopolised the market for political

[1] Cf. The quotation from Burke's speech given at the head of this chapter.

[2] *Gentleman's Magazine*, February and March 1790, Parliamentary Proceedings. Phipps, who ended as first Earl of Mulgrave, was a life-long follower of Pitt, and Howard was a leading figure in the Army.

literature during the winter of 1789–90.[1] On February 15th, nevertheless, Fox rose in Parliament to give notice that he would shortly move for leave to introduce a Test Repeal Bill and brought Pitt to his feet with the contention that a "call of the House" should be arranged immediately in advance of Fox's actual motion. It was thereupon agreed that Fox's motion should be taken on Tuesday, March 2nd and the previous "call of the House", intended to bring every possible member to Westminster, on Monday, Marsh 1st.[2] In point of fact, a House of 400 was assembled to deal with the motion Fox had bravely agreed to make on behalf of the Dissenters.

Fox opened the Test Repeal debate of March 2nd in a speech that contained some bold avowals and some disarming admissions. He announced himself, for example, as a friend to Church Establishment and, while rejoicing at the emancipation of near thirty million Frenchmen, confessed that he found their treatment of Church property unwise. This should doubtless have increased the effect of his attack on the principle of Religious Tests for civil office, but the result must have been marred in many eyes by his strong denunciation of Church interventions in politics.[3] Pitt certainly could show that the Dissenters had just undertaken some political pressure of their own and that there was precedent for the view that, whatever assurances might be given for the moment, political power for Dissent meant inevitable attack on the Established Church. Yet it was Burke who again won the rhetorical success of the debate after offering to prove that the Church was in

[1] Cf. *Gentleman's Magazine*, March 1790, p. 255, for a concluding note to its reviews of the "very numerous publications which the important question has produced".

[2] Cf. G. H. Jennings, *Anecdotal History of the British Parliament*, 3rd ed., p. 598: "As regards calls of the House of Commons, it is usual to give at least a week or ten days' notice, and (according to May's *Parliamentary Practice*) the order for the House to be called over is accompanied by a resolution 'that such members as shall not then attend be sent for in the custody of the Serjeant-at-Arms'. On the call-day . . . the names of members are called—the county representatives first, and then the city and borough members. . . . The clerk takes down the names of those members who are present, and during the evening they are again called. Members not present are summoned to attend on a future day; if they are not on that occasion in the House, and fail to make some valid excuse, they are 'liable to be committed to the custody of the Serjeant-at-Arms'."

[3] *Gentleman's Magazine*, May 1790, p. 422: "Since the last agitation of this question, an attempt has been made, and, he said, too successfully, to raise a High Church party. . . . The Church, he said, never interfered in politicks but for mischief. This he endeavoured to illustrate by examples from our History. The Church, he said, as a body was always dangerous and formidable; and they have formerly, as now used a most powerful engine. . . ."

real danger. His methods are worth following in the convenient abridgment of the *Parliamentary Proceedings* published by the *Gentleman's Magazine.*

"His first great proof," it reported,[1] "was the production of a printed Catechism, written by a Mr. Robinson, and circulated with the approbation of the General Meeting of Dissenters at Harlow, containing no one precept of religion, but consisting of one continued invective against King and Bishops; in which every thing was misrepresented, and placed in the worst light, grossly libelling the National Establishment in every part and passage: and this Catechism, he said, was to be put into the hands of Dissenters' children, to teach them to lisp out censures in condemnation of the Church Established; while, possibly, the Dissenting teachers were preaching up robbery and plunder, as in France. . . .

"His next proof was a letter from a Mr. Fletcher, member of a Meeting of Dissenting Ministers held at Boston in Lincolnshire, who stated, that the meeting avowed such principles that he could not approve. He further stated, that one member, on being asked what was their object, and whether they meant to seek for any thing farther than the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts? answered . . . '*We know those things which ye are not able to bear.*' And on another member's saying, 'Give them a little light into what we intend,' they informed him, '*that they did not care the nip of a straw for the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts; but that they designed to try for the abolition of Tithes and the Liturgy.*'

"The next fact Mr. Burke produced was the declaration of Dr. Priestley,—that he hated all religious establishments . . . and quoted a letter of the Doctor's in which he talks of a train of gunpowder being laid to the Church Establishment. . . . Mr. Burke, as the last of his proofs brought forward Dr. Price's famous Sermon, and commented upon it with great severity. . . ."

It need hardly be stressed how much it meant for Burke's case to have been able to add to the somewhat overworked "dangers to the Church", represented by Price and Priestley, less familiar and more mysterious "dangers", proceeding apparently from the Dissenting rank-and-file. To have procured an isolated example of a Dissenting Catechism using bitter Long Parliament language against Church government by King and bishops, helped Burke to his best alarmist effects as did, indeed, the mysterious hint he had procured of future Dissenting plans against tithes. But it is plain that Burke who, in the past, had worked with Price, Priestley, and the Dissenting Deputies, was not yet ready to turn completely

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 425.

on his former friends.[1] He even suggested that the question of Test Repeal might be deferred while a Select Committee gave Dissenters the opportunity of refuting the "proofs" of Church danger he had brought forward. It was probably unwise, therefore, for Mr. W. Smith, one of the few Dissenters in Parliament, to attempt a bitter attack the moment Burke had sat down. One of the reports may here be quoted to illustrate the style of attack attempted and the unfortunate effect it had on the temper of the House:

> Mr. W. Smith did not wonder that the Right Hon. Gent. who had attacked a whole nation abroad while in the very act of struggling for their liberties, with the most virulent language, calling them an irrational, unprincipled, persecuting, confiscating, plundering, ferocious, bloody, and tyrannical democracy, should libel a respectable body of men at home, who had by no part of their conduct deserved to be treated with so much asperity. Mr. Smith, observing that the House were impatient for the question, forbore to enter into a minute refutation of a speech, which, he said, was hardly worth notice but for the inconsistency of it. With regard to the political catechism so much insisted on, he, who was himself a Dissenter, had never heard of it till produced by the Right Hon. Gent. . . . so little was it regarded by the Dissenters. Mr. Robinson, he said, the pretended author, was a man of fair character, but of excentric sentiments, and not at all regarded as a leader among that body. That he [Burke] should mention Dr. Priestley in the inflammatory manner in which he was represented, is the more malevolent, as the character he has given of him is in no one feature truly represented. It is true, a train of gunpowder is metaphorically mentioned by Dr. Priestley; but, till crammed with the virulent innuendos of the Rt. Hon. Gentleman, was understood no otherwise than a figurative expression for reason and argument. Mr. Smith was proceeding, when he was told the Right Hon. Gentleman was not in the House; he therefore abandoned the argument, and took notice of an observation of an honourable member. . . .

It is, perhaps, plain why the final division was 105 for Test Repeal and 294 against.[2]

[1] Cf. *Gentleman's Magazine*, May 1790, p. 426: "He next proceeded to do justice to the merits of the Dissenters, with many of whom he had lived in great intimacy", announcing, indeed, that he would have voted for Test Repeal in the past and would even now not vote against it.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 428. It would appear from the combined references of Burke and Smith that the Dissenting Catechism referred to during the debate was the *Political Catechism* of Robert Robinson, Baptist Minister at Cambridge and author of a well-known anti-Anglican *Plan of Lectures on the Principles of Nonconformity* (5th ed., 1781). Allibone's *Dictionary* dates the *Political Catechism* at 1782 and, so, like some other works destined to make their greatest noise after the French Revolution, it was doubtless inspired by the struggle against the "rotten borough" majority assembled behind Lord North.

The division-figures of March 2nd, were, of course, no very good omen for the Parliamentary Reform motion which came on on March 4th, and it may be that Flood, with his reputation of having attempted to force on Parliamentary Reform in Ireland with the aid of armed Volunteers,[1] was not the ideal Reform spokesman. Yet Flood, one of the leading orators of the time, was wise enough to take a moderate tone. He agreed that Parliament, even as it was, would be a credit to any other State in Europe but affirmed that Britain's Constitution entitled her to something better. He desired, a clear majority of the country's inhabitants to be represented in Parliament though he was prepared not to go beyond "property" in arranging an electorate that should be something better than the six or eight thousand voters who then returned the majority responsible for the fate of eight million people. The French disturbances were not a reason for delaying reform but rather a proof of the wisdom of not postponing moderate and timely reform so long as had been the case in France. And noticing that Chatham's reform suggestions had been objected to because they would not have enfranchised new classes, and Pitt's because they would have put a premium on the corruption of the smallest "rotten boroughs", Flood offered a plan of his own. He asked for one hundred new members to be allotted to the resident householders of the country, who were to be polled, parish by parish, on the same day throughout the land. The class of resident householders was the mainstay of the country and, taxed as it was, could not be confounded with the "rabble". To enfranchise the householder, indeed, and give his representatives a hundred seats would actually be to redress the balance of the Constitution which, in consequence of the steady ennobling of more and more borough-owners, had lost the equipoise between Peers, Commons and Crown that had once existed. Peers and Crown, according to Flood, enjoyed more than their share of power under the existing electoral system.

It was Windham, Burke's pupil, who made the phrase of the day in a speech contending that the existing House of Commons worked well and that the country was being exposed to a deluge of wild, impracticable ideas similar to those which had had a brief

[1] Cf. *New Annual Register*, 1785, pp. 46–9, for Flood's two Irish Reform efforts of 1783 and 1784. The Reform plan for which he had moved had been drawn up by the National Convention of Delegates from the Volunteer Army of Ireland.

vogue towards the end of the American War and had then subsided. "Where was the man", asked Windham in a much-admired passage, "that would be mad enough to advise them to repair their house in the hurricane season?" And though Fox argued that there was no better time to repair a house than when a hurricane was near, he accepted Windham's contention that there was no popular demand for Parliamentary Reform and advised Flood to withdraw his motion, assuring him, at the same time, of his support if it were pressed to a division. Pitt contrived to praise Flood and to announce his own continued adhesion to Reform while finding the time too unpropitious for accepting Flood's motion.[1] And as Flood at first refused to consider its withdrawal, the debate became a fairly full one, and almost every possible view of Parliamentary Reform was taken. Thus, Secretary Grenville expressed the opinion of those who professed opposition to Reform "at all times and in all stages"; Windham and Burke represented those who were concerned to show that the existing Parliament gave practical representation to every British interest; and Pitt, Wilberforce and even Fox typified the considerable section of the House that desired to avoid a division, possibly disastrous to Reform. That Flood and the eight speakers, who took his side in the debate, ultimately accepted the wisdom of withdrawing the Reform motion must be taken to prove that there was a very real danger of as shattering a division as had taken place two days before on Test Repeal.

The chief occasions on which basic political principle was discussed during the last session of the 1784 Parliament have now been reviewed. It is necessary, however, to remember that such occasions, if notable, were only incidents in the Sessional routine of 1790 which hardly yet revealed any essential change of political temper. It is probable, for example, that the outcry against the Tobacco Excise of 1789 which forced Pitt himself to bring in an amending Bill in 1790, worried Government a good deal more than Fox's theoretical support of "innovation". And when, on May 12th, Grey and Lambton, two of Fox's most gifted supporters, divided the Commons on the matter of Pitt's handling of the

[1] Cf. *New Annual Register*, 1790, p. 95, reporting Pitt thus: "being as firm and zealous a friend as ever to parliamentary reform, he could not consent to give his vote in silence . . . the cause of reform might suffer disgrace from being brought forward at an improper moment. It was this conviction that rendered him desirous of waiting for a more seasonable opportunity. . . ."

Nootka Sound controversy with Spain, it became obvious that most of the essential strength of the old Fox–North coalition was still available as an alternative Government. It was not merely that two divisions in the Commons gave Opposition 121 votes against 213 and 118 against 203. Parallel proceedings in the Lords found North's old Cabinet colleagues, Carlisle and Stormont, among Government's critics, and these secured the far from discouraging division of 33 against 52.[1] The expected Dissolution, moreover, when it came in June, hardly yielded a General Election in which the pros and cons of "innovation" played any considerable part. Possibly the departure of the Dissenter, William Smith, from the representation of Sudbury and that of Flood from Seaford may have been connected with the dislike of the controlling local forces for "innovation". But, for the most part, the elections seem to have been decided in the most traditional manner by the tugs of money and local influences. Thus a number of country-gentleman "independents", who had lost their seats in 1784 because of their unwillingness to proclaim the perfect rectitude of the conduct of Pitt and the King, recovered their place in Parliament.[2] And while Fox and the Government decided openly on a peaceable partition of Westminster's representation,[3] Wilkes lost the Middlesex seat he had held for twenty-two years because his constituents, who had desired a hot fight against the "tyranny" of Pitt's Tobacco Excise, found him to have lost all his old taste for demagogy.[4]

Yet, if few marks are to be found in the electoral accounts of 1790, that feeling for or against "innovation" played any large part in the outcome, there can be no doubt but that the course of events in France was being followed with close attention in Britain. The *Gentleman's Magazine*, for example, often gave the

[1] Cf. *Gentleman's Magazine*, September 1790, p. 815.

[2] Thus Sir T. C. Bunbury returned as M.P. for Suffolk; T. W. Coke as M.P. for Norfolk; W. H. Hartley as M.P. for Berkshire; and W. Baker as M.P. for Hertfordshire. Crown expenditure was, perhaps, less than in 1784.

[3] Cf. *Gentleman's Magazine*, April 1790, p. 366, for Fox, on March 30th, giving his supporters, assembled at the Crown and Anchor, his account of the facts. The "excessive expense" of attempting to win both seats was apparently the decisive factor in the electoral bargaining here as elsewhere, though, when Horne Tooke put himself forward as a third candidate, both Fox and the Government's Lord Hood must have had to spend more than they had bargained for.

[4] Cf. *New Annual Register*, 1790, Principal Occurrences, pp. 24–5, for some proof that there were those who favoured depriving Wilkes not only of his seat for Middlesex but of the City Chamberlainship on whose revenues he lived.

proceedings of the French National Assembly almost as much attention as it allowed to those of the British Parliament. And the great Anniversary Celebrations of the Fall of the Bastille, undertaken in France on July 14, 1790, were given a very long and surprisingly friendly notice in the same August number of the *Magazine* that recorded the names of the newly-elected House of Commons in Britain.[1] The tone of the notice may, perhaps, have been affected by the apparently conspicuous part Louis XVI had consented to take in the Anniversary proceedings, and by the efforts being made in France to avoid becoming committed to a Nootka Sound war against England. But if, at times, the endeavours of a strong section of alarmed moderates in the French Assembly appeared about to stabilise the Revolution on the basis of limited monarchy, the gravest troubles never seemed to cease. During the autumn of 1790, for instance, a very dangerous breakdown of discipline crippled the French Navy at the most critical stage of the Anglo-Spanish dispute on Nootka Sound.[2] Meanwhile the financial and currency situations had become critical enough to induce the Assembly majority to commit itself to a vast and perilous new issue of Assignat paper-money, "secured" on the "nationalised" Church lands.[3] To mention the constant recurrence of bloody internal disorders, the already strained position in the French West Indies, and the continental war, threatened by the Revolution's disputes with the Empire and the Papacy, is to understand the additional justification Burke felt himself to have for issuing in November 1790, his very hostile *Reflections on the French Revolution.*

The *Reflections*, of course, have their permanent place in political theory because of their stout defence of the great place needing to be allowed in politics to habit and tradition. But here it is useful to remember that Burke took his opportunity, in the *Reflections*, of making a confident prophecy to those in Paris, who were speculating on the possibility of a pro-Revolutionary party arising in Britain.

[1] Cf. *Gentleman's Magazine*, August 1790, pp. 754–8 (a notice the longer for being in small print).

[2] Cf. *Ibid.*, November 1790, pp. 1038 et sqq., reporting the proceedings of the French National Assembly on October 4th and 11th. Bitter party disputes broke out when Mirabeau, in support of a proposition to make the tricolour the future flag of the Fleet, pronounced "the antient colour, white, the colour of the Counter-Revolution". This was to give a sort of justification to the naval mutineers.

[3] *Ibid.*, for reports of the National Assembly's proceedings on September 27th.

"The cabals here," he wrote,[1] "who take a sort of share in your transactions, as yet consist of but a handful of people. If unfortunately by their intrigues, their sermons, their publications, and by a confidence derived from an unexpected union with the counsels and forces of the French nation, they should draw considerable numbers into their faction, and in consequence should seriously attempt anything here in imitation of what has been done with you, the event, I dare venture to prophesy, will be, that, with some trouble to their country, they will soon accomplish their own destruction."

The issue of the *Reflections* was the most important political event of the winter of 1790–1.[2] The governing classes throughout Europe adopted its defence of traditional institutions as their own, while the supporters of "innovation" recognised the need of prompt refutation so widely that Burke's biographer was later to give thirty-eight as the number of hostile works or pamphlets he had himself traced.[3] Of the thirty-eight, the *Vindiciae Gallicae* of the young Scottish doctor, James Mackintosh, was, perhaps, the best-planned and most satisfactory refutation of Burke undertaken from the viewpoint of the partisans of "liberty" among the professional classes and the Parliamentary Opposition.[4] Mackintosh's most fundamental defence of what had been done in Paris may be given in his own words:

If the effervescence of the popular mind is suffered to pass away without effect, it would be absurd to expect from languor what enthusiasm has not obtained. If radical reform is not, at such a moment, procured, all partial changes are evaded and defeated in the tranquillity which succeeds. The gradual reform that arises from the presiding principle exhibited in the specious theory of Mr. Burke, is belied by the experience of all ages. Whatever excellence, whatever freedom is discoverable in governments, has been infused into them by the shock of a revolution, and their subsequent progress has been only the accumulation of abuse.... Whatever is good ought to be pursued at

[1] *Reflections on the Revolution in France and on the Proceedings in certain Societies in London relative to that Event in a Letter intended to have been sent to a Gentleman in Paris*, Everyman ed., p. 85.

[2] Cf. S. A. Allibone, *A Critical Dictionary of English Literature*, i, 290: "This work was translated into French by M. Dupont, and at once took a strong hold of the public mind of Europe.... Within the first year about 19,000 copies were sold in England, and about 13,000 in France. The first demand continued in England until 30,000 copies were absorbed; and some experienced booksellers have declared that the sale was greater than of any preceding book whatever of the same price [5 shillings]....

[3] This was James Prior in his *Memoirs of the Life and Character of the Right Hon. Edmund Burke* which went through five editions between 1824 and 1854.

[4] Cf. The *Critical Review*, July and August, 1791.

the moment it is attainable. The public voice is irresistible in a period of convulsion, is condemned with impunity, when dictated by that lethargy into which nations are lulled by the tranquil course of their ordinary affairs. . . . No hope of great political improvement (let us repeat it) is to be entertained from tranquillity, for its natural operation is to strengthen all those, who are interested in perpetuating abuse. The national assembly seized the moment of eradicating the corruption and abuses, which afflicted their country. Their reform was total, that it might be commensurate with the evil, and *no part of it was delayed*, because to spare an abuse at such a period was to consecrate it, because the enthusiasm which carries nations to such enterprises is short lived, and the opportunity of reform, if once neglected, might be irrecoverably fled.

But even before the *Vindiciae Gallicae* appeared in April 1791, an answer to Burke had been issued that was destined to have much more effect among the populace. The sledge-hammer directness of the blows aimed at Burke in Thomas Paine's *Rights of Man* may be suggested by quoting the pamphlet's opening sentences.[1]

"Among the incivilities by which nations or individuals provoke and irritate each other," declared Paine, "Mr. Burke's pamphlet on the French Revolution is an extraordinary instance. Neither the people of France, nor the National Assembly, were troubling themselves about the affairs of England, or the English Parliament; and that Mr. Burke should commence an unprovoked attack upon them, both in parliament and in public, is a conduct that cannot be pardoned on the score of manners, nor justified on that of policy.

"There is scarcely an epithet of abuse to be found in the English language, with which Mr. Burke has not loaded the French nation and the National Assembly. Everything which rancour, prejudice, ignorance or knowledge could suggest, is poured forth in the copious fury of near four hundred pages. . . ."

It was not, of course, this hearty onslaught on Burke that led a hostile reviewer, as early as March 1791, to hint at the advisability of police measures in regard to Paine's *Rights of Man*. The fact was that, in the course of his pamphlet, Paine had developed a frontal attack on monarchy as a principle of government and, in addition, had undertaken bitter criticism of the Hanoverian dynasty of England. The unusual force of Paine's pamphlet must have been grasped by the *Critical Review* writer, who thus concluded a most hostile examination:[2]

[1] The edition prepared by Hypatia Bradlaugh Bonner has been used.
[2] *Critical Review*, March 1791, p. 341.

The evils arising from inflammatory publications are great and extensive; for though the fallacy of the arguments cannot impose upon a well-informed mind, yet such writings produce unhappy effects upon the ignorant, weaken their attachment to the laws of their country, and dispose them to turbulence, under the mildest administration . . . writers of this class are more fit to plan "treasons, stratagems, and spoils", than to suggest useful remarks with respect to the government of a free people.

Perhaps a further short quotation from the *Rights of Man* may suggest why, during the course of 1791, Paine seemed to be displacing Burke as the centre of pamphleteering controversy.[1]

"If government," wrote Paine, "be what Mr. Burke describes it, 'a contrivance of human wisdom,' I might ask him, if wisdom was at such a low ebb in England, that it was become necessary to import it from Holland and from Hanover? . . . there could exist no more real occasion in England to have sent for a Dutch stadtholder, or a German elector, than there was in America to have done a similar thing. If a country does not understand its own affairs, how is a foreigner to understand them, who knows neither its laws, its manners, nor its language? . . .

"If there is anything in monarchy which we people of America do not understand, I wish Mr. Burke would be so kind as to inform us. I see in America, a government extending over a country ten times as large as England, and conducted with regularity, for a fortieth part of the expence which government costs in England. If I ask a man in America if he wants a King, he retorts, and asks me if I take him for an idiot? How is it that this difference happens? are we more or less wise than others? I see in America the generality of people living in a stile of plenty unknown in monarchical countries; and I see that the principle of its government, which is that of the *equal Rights of Man*, is making a rapid progress in the world.

"If monarchy is a useless thing, why is it kept up anywhere? and if a necessary thing, how can it be dispensed with?"

A mention of the retorts to Burke's *Reflections on the French Revolution* has taken this discussion on into the pamphleteering of 1791. But Burke's *Reflections* were issued in November 1790, and it was doubtless hoped that they would influence the newly-elected Parliament, convoked for November 25th. A brief examination of the new Parliament's first Session would unquestionably furnish the best background against which to

[1] From the 1934 issue of Hypatia Bradlaugh Bonner's edition of the *Rights of Man*.

attempt a judgement on Paine's *Rights of Man* and the sensational success with which it introduced democratic Republicanism upon the English political stage.[1] The next chapter will therefore open with some brief account of the leading events before Parliament during the Session, November 25, 1790– June 10, 1791.

[1] Even the self-styled Peter Pindar, the rhyming jester on George III's alleged love of money, his Queen's alleged hoarding of diamonds, and "Billy" Pitt's alleged fondness for power, was sobered into issuing his angry *Odes to Mister Paine . . . on the intended Celebration of the Downfall of the French Empire by a Set of British Democrates, on the Fourteenth of July.* And though returning to his accustomed vein, when hearing a rumour, in 1792, of an intended application to Parliament for an increase of the Royal income, he none the less prefaced *More Money! or Odes of Instruction to Mister Pitt* with a reminder that while "by no means an advocate for Mr. Paine's violent system of Revolution. I am too much the POET OF THE PEOPLE not to sing for a *Reformation.*" Pitt was accordingly given rhymed instructions on how to meet any royal wish for more money. One short quotation must stand for much spiteful gossip and rumour, not without political importance in revolutionary times. Pitt was to say, amid much else:

> "You really do not know how rich you are:
> Your wealth so wond'rous makes your subjects stare,
> Squeez'd from great cities, towns, and hovels:
> HAWKSB'RY and COUTTS can show such heaps of treasure;
> Such loads of guineas for the royal pleasure,
> Heap'd into iron chests with shovels;
> Then how can Majesty be poor?
> Your coffers, Sir, are running o'er; . . ."

CHAPTER III

THE "REPUBLICAN" SOCIETIES

"At a meeting, 9th November 1792 . . . the following Address was read and approved:

"The Society for Constitutional Information in London to the National Convention in France.

"Servants of a Sovereign People, and Benefactors of Mankind, We rejoice that your Revolution has arrived at that point of perfection which will permit us to address you by this title. . . . Every successive epoch in your affairs has added something to the triumphs of liberty; and the glorious victory of the 10th of August has finally prepared the way for a constitution, which, we trust, you will establish on the basis of reason and nature.

"Considering the mass of delusion accumulated on mankind to obscure their understandings, you cannot be astonished at the opposition you have met both from tyrants and slaves. . . .

"The events of every day are proving that your cause is cherished by the people in all your continental vicinity; that a majority of each of those nations are your real friends, whose governments have tutored them into apparent foes, and that they only await to be delivered by your arms. . . .

"The condition of Englishmen is less to be deplored—here the hand of oppression has not yet ventured completely to ravish the pen from us, nor openly to point the sword at you. From bosoms burning with ardor in your cause, we tender you our warmest wishes. . . ."

From the Constitutional Society's Minutes as reproduced in Appendix C of the *Second Report from the Committee of Secrecy appointed by the House of Commons* (1794).

"Association for preserving Liberty and Property against Republicans and Levellers. . . .

"Considering the danger to which the Publick Peace and Order are exposed by the circulating of mischievous Opinions, founded upon plausible but false reasoning; and that this circulation is principally carried on by the industry of Clubs and Societies of various denominations in many parts of the Kingdom:

"It appears to us, That it is now become the duty of all Persons, who wish well to their Native Country, to endeavour, in their several neighbourhoods, to prevent the sad effects of such mischievous industry; and that it would greatly tend to

promote these good endeavours, if Societies were formed in different parts of the Kingdom whose object should be to support the Laws, to suppress seditious Publications, and to defend our Persons and Property against the innovations and depredations that seem to be threatened. . . ."

From the Association's *Proceedings* under foundation-date, November 20, 1792.

"*Authentic Copy of a PETITION praying for a Reform in Parliament, presented to the House of Commons by CHARLES GREY, Esq., on Monday, 6th May 1793; and signed only by the Members of THE SOCIETY OF THE FRIENDS OF THE PEOPLE, associated for the purpose of obtaining a Parliamentary Reform*

. . . Your Petitioners complain, that the number of Representatives assigned to the different Counties is grossly disproportionate to their comparative Extent, Population, and Trade.

Your Petitioners complain that the Elective Franchise is so partially and unequally distributed . . . that the majority of your Honourable House is elected by less than fifteen thousand Electors . . .

Your Petitioners complain, that the exercise of the Elective Franchise is only renewed once in seven years . . ."

What one of the impeached Societies was working towards.

THE first real contention in the new Parliament at 1790 came on December 13th, when Fox's young friend, Grey, declaring the information supplied by Ministers on the Nootka Sound dispute to be insufficient, moved for the production of further papers. There was apparently some suspicion among Opposition that Pitt had taken too high a hand with Spain and that it had cost the country vast extra sums in naval preparations. The division of December 13th gave Opposition 134 votes against 258, and next day another debate produced the very parallel figures of 123 against 247.[1] Such divisions encouraged Fox, on December 22nd, to give some support to the demand for papers on the Indian war then being waged against Tipu Sahib. A motion for papers was, in fact, carried which implied that there was some ground for suspecting that Tipu had been unwisely handled. But a greater opportunity altogether for Opposition was fated to come in the early spring of 1791 when Ministers, enmeshed in a none too popular Prussian alliance, found themselves driven, by the pressure of their Prussian ally, to prepare for a Black Sea war to prevent Russian "aggrandisement" at Turkish expense. On March 29th Opposition divided against Government at 135–228, and subsequent proceedings on April 12th, April 15th and May 25th showed very plainly that, if Pitt had not beaten a retreat from his original notion of a Black Sea armament, he might, in unfortunate circumstances, have ruined his Government.[2]

This type of discussion on Foreign Affairs, though it offered Opposition useful chances of criticising Government, had no direct bearing on the problem of "liberty". There was other Sessional business, of course, with a most important bearing on isolated departments of "liberty", Fox's valuable Libel Bill, for instance, temporarily destroyed by Thurlow in the Lords though Pitt, in the Commons, had accepted its proposed delimitation of the respective parts to be played by judge and jury in Press trials. The most fundamental discussion, however, both of general constitutional issues and the particular problems raised by the French Revolution was fated to come on the Government's Canada Bill. Ministers were proposing to divide English Upper Canada from

[1] Cf. *New Annual Register*, 1791, British and Foreign History, pp. 137–40.
[2] Cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 190–9. See also Earl Stanhope, *Life of Pitt*, ii, 101–20.

French Lower Canada and to bestow a constitution upon each. But Opposition objected to representative houses numbering merely sixteen, in the case of Upper Canada, and thirty in that of Lower Canada; it strongly opposed septennial elections as far too infrequent; it criticised, particularly for Catholic Lower Canada, the huge reservation of lands for the support of an official Protestant clergy; and Fox made a special point against the introduction, *de novo*, of the hereditary principle in the composition of the two Canadian Legislative Councils. Though Fox endeavoured to safeguard himself from being considered an enemy to the hereditary principle where it already existed,[1] he could not refrain from a dangerous jest at Burke's expense when wondering whether hereditary titles in Canada were intended to revive, in the West, the spirit of chivalry whose extinction in France some gentlemen so much deplored. For Burke this was apparently the last straw, and he resolved on a counter-demonstration when the Canada Bill went into Committee on May 6th.

On the plea of discussing which of the three constitutional systems, American, French or British, would best suit Canada, Burke launched himself, on May 6th on a fierce denunciation of the "rights of man" and the French Constitution.[2] Disregarding calls to order from the floor of the House, Burke finally found himself facing a motion declaring "that dissertations on the French constitution are not regular and orderly, when the question is, that the clauses of the Quebec bill be read a second time, paragraph by paragraph". In seconding this motion, Fox took occasion to repeat his former opinion that the French Revolution was, "on the whole, one of the most glorious events in the history of mankind", to assert that the Rights of Man formed the basis of

[1] Cf. *New Annual Register*, 1791, British and Foreign History, p. 183: "As to the points of hereditary honours and hereditary powers, Mr. Fox observed, to say that they were good, or they were not good, as a general proposition, was not easy to decide; but he saw nothing so good in them as to warrant their introduction into a country where they were not known, and by such means to distinguish Canada from all the colonies in the West Indies. In countries where they made a part of the constitution, he did not think it wise to destroy them; but to create them where they did not exist, he considered as exceedingly unwise. . . ." The proposed Legislative Councils were to be made up of nominated life-members with a possible admixture of hereditary Councillors.

[2] Cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 184–5: "He next noticed the French constitution, which he condemned in the strongest terms. He said the practical effects of this constitution might be seen in St. Domingo, and the other French islands: they were flourishing and happy, till they heard of the rights of man. As soon as this system arrived among them, Pandora's box, replete with every mortal evil, seemed to fly open; hell itself to yawn. . . ."

the British Constitution and to complain that Burke's conduct tended to help those who were traducing and misrepresenting him, Fox, as a Republican. Burke, in his turn, had complaints that Fox's conduct had not been that of the perfect friend and, after further insistence on the dangers of praising the French example, he announced a complete breach from which Fox could not win him. Fox was, perhaps, warned by others that he had gone too far in some of his expressions for on May 11th, still on the Canada Bill, he made a more conservative declaration of principles. According to one report:[1]

> Mr. Fox declared himself an advocate for the British constitution, and for hereditary honours, such as existed in this country, which were frequently incentives to patriotism and virtue: he granted, however, that his principles were so far republican, that he wished to give the crown less power, and the people more, in every government, old or new; and added, that he was decidedly of opinion, that the constitution of the country was more liable to be ruined by an increase of the power of the crown than of the people.

It would be interesting to know whether he had been reminded that, if he was ever to return to office, it would have to be in alliance with the phalanx of hereditary legislators headed by the Duke of Portland and Earl Fitzwilliam. To this phalanx, indeed, Burke must already have been planning the *Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs* that appeared later in the summer.

Meanwhile Paine's *Rights of Man* had begun the career of astonishing success and circulation which soon seemed to make Republicanism a political force to be reckoned with.[2] As early as April the reviewers had the first attempted refutation in their hands,[3] and when more followed in May,[4] one reviewer at least expressed his astonishment that the work should have "its

[1] Cf. *Ibid.*, British and Foreign History, pp. 189–91.

[2] Cf. S. A. Allibone, *A Critical Dictionary of English Literature*, ii, 1485 (published 1870), for the serious estimate that, presumably over a period of years, "more than 1,500,000 copies were circulated in England, and many French copies were sold in France". However exaggerated this estimate may seem to be, it testifies, at least, to the book-trade's tradition of a vast circulation, especially in the cheap editions which were soon being issued to meet the artisan demand.

[3] The pamphlet, *A Defence of the Constitution of England against the Libels that have been lately published on it; particularly in Paine's Pamphlet on the Rights of Man.*

[4] Cf. *A Letter from a Magistrate to Mr. William Rose, of Whitehall, on Mr. Paine's Rights of Man.*

advocates among men of undisputed judgement and, we believe, undoubted integrity".[1] More contradictors of Paine were noticed by the reviewers in June,[2] and, in July, refutation took the form of destructive mob-riots in the Birmingham area, stimulated apparently by those who resented that a dinner should have been organised there to commemorate the second anniversary of the fall of the Bastille.[3] The disgraceful Birmingham rioting hardly brought much credit to the cause of "Church and King" which was presumably being defended. A greater danger to the vogue of Paine's politics was the libellous *Life* issued, during the summer, by a Government clerk using the pseudonym of Francis Oldys.[4] How fatal this was meant to be to the influence of the *Rights of Man* may be estimated from this extract from a review notice:[5]

Our author, with an industry which we wish had a better object, pursues this inflammatory writer through the various stages of his motley life, through the scenes of meanness which necessity dictated; and the detestation which his cruelty and his wickedness excited, till at last he places him under the patronage of the Constitutional Society, who condescend to correct the blunders of his language, to panegericize the cub, which they had licked into some form, and to protect the wretch, whose life seems, from this account, to have been more than once forfeited to the laws of his country. To this Society, and to their confederates, it is owing, that the name of patriot is now a disgrace, and that Englishmen can be branded with the infamy of attacking the constitution, under which they have been prosperous and happy, and governors who have yet lenity enough to withold the punishment which they have merited and even braved.

The life of this man is varied . . . by ignominy of every kind. . . . A dishonest tradesman, a suspected exciseman, a cruel husband, a

[1] *Critical Review*, May 1791, p. 111.

[2] Cf. *Ibid.*, June 1791, pp. 229–30, for notices of three pamphlets hostile to Paine. Gillray's caricature attack was dated May 23rd.

[3] Cf. *New Annual Register*, 1791, British and Foreign History, pp. 210–13. The requisite excitement had apparently been produced when, some days before the dinner, "six copies of a most inflammatory and seditious handbill, proposing the French revolution as a model to the English, and exciting them to rebellion, were left by some person unknown in a public house". There were suspicions that the "Church and King" men had themselves produced the handbills in order to throw further discredit on their opponents.

[4] Cf. S. A. Allibone, *A Critical Dictionary of English Literature*, ii, 1453: "Francis Oldys is a fictitious name: this book was written by George Chalmers, at that period one of the Clerks of the Board of Plantations." Sherwin's *Life of Paine* is also quoted, affirming that the Oldys pamphlet "is filled with falsehoods".

[5] *Critical Review*, September 1791, pp. 72–3. The *Life* was in its third edition already! Oldys, be it noted, spells his subject's name as Pain.

treacherous secretary, and a seditious firebrand, are the characteristics, according to Mr. Oldys's account, which distinguish the protégé of the Constitutional Society. . . .

The Oldys *Life of Paine* was obviously written for the purpose of ending the influence of the author of the *Rights of Man*. But though apparently well-calculated to besmirch and ruin Paine, the pamphlet failed of its intended effects. There is ample evidence in the Reviews that anti-Paine writing continued to be busily issued by those who still saw good reason to fear the effects of the *Rights of Man*. Nor did the Society for Constitutional Information consent to disperse or disappear because of the charges that had been heaped up against its "protégé". This Society, first founded, during the Reform agitation of 1780, to undertake the free distribution of reform-tracts among the populace, had been revived in 1790 after a period of hibernation. It seems to have found a good recruiting field among certain sections of the professional classes[1] and to have done much to spread the vogue of the *Rights of Man*. Its leaders, moreover, were aware that Paine was at work on a second part to the *Rights of Man* whose effects on the populace were calculated to be immense. When, indeed, the *Rights of Man, Part II, Combining Principle and Practice* appeared in February 1792 the political results were speedy and astounding. Public-house meetings of artisans and small shopkeepers had been stirred up already by the first part, but now ambitious political organisation was attempted that would hitherto have been deemed incredible. Thus, the famous London Corresponding Society, founded before the appearance of Paine's second part, quite obviously owed its rapid expansion to the publication of that tract. And there is evidence that very similar effects were produced in Manchester, Sheffield and Norwich.

The Sheffield Society for Constitutional Information shall be

[1] In Prior's *Life of Burke* the party ready for innovation was thus treated: "This party besides [Fox] embraced many other Members of Opposition, his followers, some philosophers, the great body of second-rate literary men, some clergymen, many lawyers, many dissenting ministers, and nine-tenths of the profession of physic—all therefore belonging to the educated classes, but the great majority without claim to any practical acquaintance with politics: men deep in speculation, and in books but wholly ignorant of the workings of governments." Such a passage, despite possible exaggerations, is almost as useful as the information that 900 sat down to a dinner at the Crown and Anchor Tavern, Strand, in celebration of the second anniversary of the French Revolution, July 14, 1791. (*New Annual Register*, 1791.)

left to tell its own early history as it was given, on March 14, 1792, to the London Constitutional Society in a letter asking for the establishment of a "regular communication". Here are the relevant parts of the letter:[1]

This Society, composed chiefly of the manufacturers of Sheffield, began about four months ago, and is already increased to nearly two thousand Members, and is daily increasing, exclusive of the adjacent towns and villages, who are forming themselves into similar Societies.

Considering, as we do, that the want of knowledge and information in the general mass of the people has exposed them to numberless impositions and abuses, the exertions of this Society are directed to the acquirement of useful knowledge, and to spread the same as far as our endeavours and abilities can extend.

We declare that we have derived more true knowledge from the two Works of Mr. Thomas Paine, intituled *Rights of Man, Part the First and Second*, than from any other author or subject. The Practice as well as the principle of Government is laid down in those Works, in a manner so clear, and irresistibly convincing, that this Society do hereby resolve to give their Thanks to Mr. Paine. . . .

Also.

Resolved unanimously, That the Thanks of this Society be given to Mr. Paine, for the affectionate concern he has shewn in his Second Work in behalf of the poor, the infant, and the aged; who, notwithstanding the opulence which blesses other parts of the community, are, by the grievous weight of taxes, rendered the miserable victims of poverty and wretchedness.

Resolved unanimously, That this Society, disdaining to be considered either of a ministerial or opposition party (names of which we are tired, having been so often deceived by both) do ardently recommend to all their Fellow Citizens, into whose hands these Resolutions may come, to confer seriously and calmly with each other. . . .

The force, directness and pungency of Paine's Republican writing had obviously had large effects in artisan Sheffield as had also the programme of social aid for the poor which is so markedly original a feature of *Part the Second*. Maternity-benefit for poor mothers, child-allowances to poor families for children under fourteen, partial old-age pensions at fifty and total old-age pensions at sixty—these were only some of the benefits that the English democratic republic of the future was to offer the poor. And if these suggestions of Paine's anticipated very remarkably the

[1] As reproduced in Appendix C to the *Second Report from the Committee of Secrecy appointed by the House of Commons* in 1794.

demands of later social-democracy, the same thing is true of Paine's plans for raising the necessary money. To read Paine's suggestion of a progressive income-tax, rising to twenty shillings in the pound,[1] to follow his argument on the money that could be diverted from armaments and from Court and Government expenses, if a Triple Republican Alliance of Britain, France and America were formed, is to have yet another prophetic glimpse into the most typical thinking of the "masses" during the ensuing century. But with what alarming quickness even the Government of 1792 seemed likely, unless repression were undertaken, to have a radical democracy on its hands, may be instanced as well from developments in Manchester as in Sheffield. Here are the resolutions adopted at the meeting of the Manchester Constitutional Society on March 13, 1792:[2]

That the Thanks of this Society are due to Mr. Thomas Paine, for the publication of his *Second Part of the Rights of Man, combining Principle and Practice*, a work of the highest importance to every Nation under heaven, but particularly to this, as containing excellent and practical plans for an immediate and considerable reduction of the public expenditure; for the prevention of wars; for the extension of our manufactures and commerce; for the education of the young; for the comfortable support of the aged; for the better maintenance of the poor of the poor of every description; and, finally, for lessening greatly, and without delay, the enormous load of taxes under which this Country at present labours.

That this Society congratulates their Country at large on the influence which Mr. Paine's publications appear to have had in procuring the repeal of some oppressive taxes in the present Session of Parliament; and they hope that this adoption of a small part of Mr. Paine's ideas will be followed by the most strenuous exertions to accomplish a complete Reform in the present inadequate state of the Representation of the People; and that the other great plans of public benefit which Mr. Paine has so powerfully recommended, will be speedily carried into effect.

The 1792 Session of Parliament, referred to above, did not go by without notice being taken of the growing working-class effervescence excited by the *Rights of Man*. Paine and his friends actually seem to have believed that Pitt's Budget statement of February 17th, with its announcement of the repeal of a number of

[1] *Rights of Man*, ed. Bonner (1934 issue), p. 138.

[2] Appendix C, *Second Report from the Committee of Secrecy appointed by the House of Commons* (1794).

taxes burdensome to the poor,[1] had been affected by the Minister's private knowledge of suggestions that Paine had had in print for some time and which were just about to be published in the *Second Part*.[2] Whatever may have been the true facts in the case of the Budget, certain it is that the success of the *Rights of Man* had very much to do with the nature of some important Parliamentary discussions later in the Session. One of these discussions occurred on April 30th after Grey, fast becoming Fox's most active lieutenant in Opposition, gave notice that he would move in the next Session for Parliamentary Reform. Grey had just associated himself with a number of other prominent Oppositionists, including Sheridan, Lambton, Erskine, Whitbread and Baker, in founding a Reform society that had taken the democratic style of The Friends of the People, had published resolutions and a declaration of sentiments, and was receiving the adhesion of "some of the most respectable characters both in the commercial and literary world". It was noticeable that Grey, in accounting for activities that were believed to arouse "serious apprehensions" in Government circles, declared that the times were "critical, and the minds of the people agitated: it was to remove every cause of complaint, and to tranquillize the nation, that he meant to bring forward his motion".[3]

A heated discussion followed, led in a somewhat excited strain by Pitt himself who seems to have been alarmed that Parliamentarians should have adopted so Gallic a style as Friends of the People and advertised resolutions in the newspapers, "inviting the public to join the standard of reform". The end of the Prime Minister's harangue is thus rendered in one report:[4]

> He saw with concern the gentlemen to whom he alluded, united with others, who professed not reform only, but direct hostility to the very form of our government, who threatened an extinction to monarchical government, hereditary succession, and everything which promoted order and subordination in a state. To his last hour he would resist every attempt of this nature; and if he was called upon either to hazard this, or for ever to abandon all hopes of reform, he would say he had no hesitation in preferring the latter alternative.

[1] Cf. *New Annual Register*, 1792, British and Foreign History, p. 40, for the repeal of the duty on female servants, the cart-and-waggon tax, the window duty for houses with fewer than seven windows, the "new" malt duty and a halfpenny per pound of the duty on candles.

[2] Cf. Appendix, *Rights of Man, Part the Second* for Paine's own account.

[3] Cf. *New Annual Register*, 1792, British and Foreign History, p. 67.

[4] Cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 68–9.

There followed a clever Opposition speech from Fox, a long anti-revolutionary oration from Burke, seconded by Windham, Erskine's defence, broken by "much clamour", of his membership of the Friends of the People and Sheridan's assault on the clamourers and on the inconsistencies of the personal record both of Pitt and Burke. Altercation among members continued for some time.

The discussion of April 30th was conducted in an atmosphere the more heated because the French Legislative Assembly had just declared war on the Emperor and was plainly trusting to its sympathisers abroad to facilitate its expected victories in the Austrian Netherlands. Months before, Burke, in his *Thoughts on French Affairs*, had painted a gloomy picture of the possibilities open to the French revolutionaries because of the activities of pro-French parties abroad,[1] and his speech of April 30th had contained a fierce denunciation of the recent appearance of two members of the Manchester Constitutional Society at the Jacobins Club in Paris.[2] That the London Constitutional Society, too, should, early in May, have been busying itself and its associated societies with the broadcasting throughout England of an assurance of support to France, written in the most "inflammatory" terms and transmitted through the Jacobins, was doubtless one of the causes that finally persuaded Ministers to prepare the menacing Proclamation of May 21st against seditious writings.[3] A probably more important cause was the cheap edition of the *Rights of Man* that Paine was just arranging to issue and, in defence of which, the London Constitutional Society undertook a handbill campaign that illustrated very usefully the amount of Radical organisation that had so far been created. During the latter part of May and the first days of June the London Constitutional Society arranged to send out the Paine handbills in the following quantities: 1200 to the Sheffield Constitutional Society; 1200 to the Norwich Constitutional Society; 200 to the Southwark Constitutional Society;

[1] Cf. *Reflections on the French Revolution* (Everyman ed.), p. 314: "In the meantime a system of French conspiracy is gaining ground in every country. This system happening to be founded on principles the most delusive indeed, but the most flattering to the natural propensities of the unthinking multitude, and to the speculations of all those who think, without thinking very profoundly must daily extend its influence. . . ." The *Thoughts* are printed with the *Reflections* in this edition.

[2] The other side of the picture was given in Thomas Cooper's pamphlet, *A Reply to Mr. Burke's Invective against Mr. Cooper and Mr. Watt.*

[3] *New Annual Register*, 1792, Public Papers, pp. 52–3.

200 to the London Corresponding Society; 200 to Derby; 200 to the Constitutional Whigs; 200 to the Society at Belper; 600 to Birmingham; 200 to the Society at Aldgate; 1200 to Manchester; 200 to Liverpool; 500 to Cambridge; and 400 to be distributed among the Societies in the neighbourhood of Glasgow.[1]

Meanwhile Government's Proclamation against seditious writings had been issued on May 21st and debated in Parliament on May 25th.[2] The Proclamation, for all its menacing words, was probably a compromise between those elements in the Government eager for "action" and those still reluctant to embark on a difficult libel prosecution that might make Paine as great a popular hero as Wilkes had once been. The population was warned that seditious writings were being "industriously dispersed"; foreign elements in the conspiracy were vaguely indicated; and magistrates were exhorted to vigilance and to regular communication with the Secretary of State. Opposition, of course, found much to criticise. It was argued that, if Government's case was against Paine and his publishers, the proper course was to open a prosecution instead of alarming a nation. Others considered the Proclamation as an invitation to the magistrates to organise spying and tale-bearing so that, in future, it might well become impossible to mention a rotten borough without danger. Grey was especially indignant for he considered that Government had deliberately worded the Proclamation in a way tending to throw suspicion even over the Friends of the People. Such suspicion, he thought, was insidiously calculated to drive a wedge into Opposition and separate the Parliamentary members of the Friends of the People from their political colleagues.[3] Evidently Grey was not unaware of Burke's efforts to interest the "Old Whigs" and their

[1] Appendix C to the *Second Report from the Committee of Secrecy* (1794) reproduced for the Commons the Society's Minute Book.

[2] It is worth remarking that Ministers had just been informed that their Dutch allies were much concerned at the growth of a democratic and pro-French agitation. (Cf. Fortescue MSS., ii, 268, for the British envoy at the Hague writing on May 15, 1792: "I found great uneasiness in the minds of the Dutch Ministers respecting the associations in London, Norwich, Sheffield, for the pretended purposes of constitutional reform.") After the Proclamation, a Hague dispatch of June 5th reported: "The measure in England of the proclamation, and the debates in consequence, have had the happiest and most creditable effect."

[3] This Parliamentary demonstration was followed up outside the House when, on June 2nd, a general meeting of the Friends of the People adopted strong resolutions which it was resolved to print in the morning and evening newspapers. (*New Annual Register*, 1792, Public Papers, pp. 65–7.)

former Prime Minister, the Duke of Portland, in a Coalition with Pitt.[1]

After Parliament was prorogued on June 15th, the political temperature was fated to rise rather than fall. The Reform societies received early information that definite steps had at last been taken to begin a prosecution against Paine and they retorted by raising funds for his defence and broadcasting copies of his biting *Mr. Paine's Letter to Mr. Secretary Dundas.*[2] July 14th dinners were once again defiantly arranged,[3] and meanwhile the immense circulation of the cheap edition of the *Rights of Man* had commenced which made new converts by thousands and new Reform societies by scores. The London Corresponding Society, for example, began that large enrolment of mechanics and creation of new branches that was, before long, to give it such formidable agitating power in the metropolis. And in Scotland, where a large proportion of the shop-keeping classes had the special grievance of Government's neglect of their long and patient agitation for Burgh Reform, the surprising number of new Reform societies which began to appear must, often enough, have enjoyed some shop-keeper sympathy.[4]

It would be a mistake to study popular developments in Britain, during the second half of 1792, without keeping constantly in mind

[1] Cf. D. G. Barnes, *George III and William Pitt*, pp. 236–54. See also *Diaries and Correspondence of the first Earl of Malmesbury*, ii, 450–73, for this great diplomat's efforts of June and July 1792 after a return from the Continent.

[2] The Minutes of the London Constitutional Society under dates June 15th, June 22nd and June 29th as reproduced in Appendix C to the *Second Report from the Committee of Secrecy* (1794).

[3] Though not the mass dinners of 1790 and 1791. Thus the London Constitutional Society declined the project of a common dinner with the Friends of the People (Southwark). Obviously some, at least, on the "popular" side saw the dangers of needlessly antagonising the comfortable "public" whose rally to Government's proclamation against Paine and "sedition" was thus being reported on by September [*Annual Register*, ii, 37]: "The number of addresses presented to his majesty, to return thanks for the late proclamation against seditious writings, amount to 341; including almost all the counties, corporations, boroughs, cities, and towns in Great Britain." Paine's answer was the well-known *Address to the Addressers.*

[4] In the London Corresponding Society's papers, reproduced in Appendix D to the *Second Report from the Committee of Secrecy* (1794), there is the following description of the Scottish position, as communicated from Sheffield in mid-October by the Editors of the *Patriot*: "It is with the greatest satisfaction we announce to you, that several Societies have been formed within the last Three Weeks in Edinburgh, not less than Seven or Eight; and also that a Patriotic Print is about to make its appearance, under the direction of Major Johnson. . . . We have received some most spirited communications from thence; and our Bookseller has sent an order for 50 additional Numbers of every publication of our work more than what was before in circulation, with an assurance that it was daily increasing in fame and demand for it. We clearly foresee that Scotland will soon take the lead of this country. . . ."

the absorption with which the progress of events in France was being followed—the Austro-Prussian invasion of July, the fall of the Monarchy in August, the Convention's declaration of a Republic in September, the Republican troops' military victories in October and the growth of dangerous tension, in November, between the Paris and London Governments.[1] Republican success in France undoubtedly stimulated the bolder spirits in British societies to extremism.[2] At Sheffield an interesting development took place in the production of a new periodical organ of agitation, *The Patriot*. At Stockport, which preceded Leicester, Coventry, Birmingham and Leeds, in adding a second generation of Reform societies to the first, it was thought proper to send some implied rebuke to the London Corresponding Society for the moderation of its public demands for a "fair, equal and impartial representation of the people in Parliament". Writing on September 27, 1792, the Stockport purists found no sufficient promise in the Corresponding Society's programme that the grievances arising from aristocracy would be redressed or, while the Bishops remained in the Lords, that the "universal right of conscience" would ever be attained.[3] Yet the rebuked Society was just then busy on the dangerous work of trying to organise a united Reform demonstration in support of the French Convention and against coalised "German despots" including the Elector of Hanover! Plainly neither the Stockport Society nor, perhaps, even the Corresponding Society was yet aware of the full weight of legal repression that could be brought to bear on them.

From the Government's point of view, of course, demonstrations of sympathy with the retreating French Republicans of September were considerably less culpable and dangerous than the applause given in November to French victories on foreign soil. The Reformers affected to see only the triumphs of "liberty"

[1] Cf. Fortescue MSS., ii, 332, for Lord Grenville, the Foreign Secretary, on November 13th: "The increased activity and boldness of our Republicans since the Duke of Brunswick's retreat is certainly very striking, and still more of the same sort must be apprehended from the conquest of Flanders."

[2] Cf. *New Annual Register*, 1793, British and Foreign History, p. 5: "The erection of so vast a country as France into a republic flattered their vanity, and seemed to confirm their speculations. They anticipated the most splendid exertions from the rising commonwealth; and the more sanguine among them contemplated, not without a malignant pleasure, the prospect of hostilities with this country, which they conceived by increasing the public burthens might also excite the public discontent, and facilitate those visionary plans of reform, which either from enthusiasm or self-interest they encouraged and approved."

[3] Appendix D to the *Second Report from the Committee of Secrecy* (1794).

over "tyranny" and "aristocracy" and gave no heed either to the horrible September massacres or to the French illegalities on the Scheldt which caused the embodiment of the militia on December 1st and the assembly of Parliament on December 13th. The resolve of the London Constitutional Society, during November, to send two members to Paris with an adulatory Address to the Convention seems to have been a special mistake. On November 20th the first formal counter-organisation to the Reformers' clubs was undertaken in the Association for Preserving Liberty and Property against Republicans and Levellers. The Association, parent of a numerous brood,[1] had already plunged into busy activity[2] when Parliament met to hear a King's Speech denouncing the practices of the Reformers at home and censuring those of the French abroad. Here are the salient parts of the Speech:[3]

> The seditious practices which had been in a great measure checked . . . have of late been more openly renewed, and with increased activity. A spirit of tumult and disorder (the natural consequence of such practices) has shown itself in acts of riot and insurrection, which required the interposition of a military force in support of the civil magistrate. The industry employed to excite discontent on various pretexts, and in different parts of the kingdom, has appeared to proceed from a design to attempt the destruction of our happy constitution, and the subversion of all order and government; and this design has evidently been pursued in connection and concert with persons in foreign countries.
>
> I have carefully observed a strict neutrality in the present war on the continent, and have uniformly abstained from any interference with respect to the internal affairs of France; but it is impossible for me to see, without the most serious uneasiness, the strong and increasing indications which have appeared there of an intention to excite disturbances in other countries, to disregard the rights of neutral nations, and to pursue views of conquest and aggrandisement, as well as to adopt towards my allies the states-general (who have observed the same neutrality with myself) measures which are neither conformable to the law of nations, nor to the positive stipulations of existing treaties. . . .

[1] Cf. *New Annual Register*, 1793, British and Foreign History, p. 6: "The contagion of associating spread through every part of the kingdom; and the experiment at least proved, that the great majority of the nation was decidedly against an alteration of the established government; and that, notwithstanding the influence of Mr. Paine's writings, the actual number of republicans was much smaller than had been represented. . . ."

[2] See the printed *Proceedings of the Association* for meetings three times a week at the Crown and Anchor Tavern.

[3] *New Annual Register*, 1792, Public Papers, pp. 60–1.

It was, perhaps, fortunate that the treatment of home affairs in the King's Speech had been in such exaggerated colours for it helped Fox to determine, despite the desertion of a large part of his following, that Liberty and Peace were both in peril. The official suggestion of foreign responsibility for some of the political agitation at home was, to say the least, disingenuous. And Ministers' employment of the term "insurrection" was completely unjustified by any set of facts before the public, which knew of no worse disorders than seamen's wage-riots at Shields and Yarmouth, riots that were, of course, not political at all.[1] There are indications that an officious and credulous Lord Mayor had been given details of a perhaps imaginary plot, but Fox was so convinced of Government's unscrupulousness in making use of this alleged "information" that he hesitated not to speak thus:[2]

> I state it therefore to be my firm opinion and belief, that there is not one fact asserted in his Majesty's speech which is not *false*—not one assertion or insinuation which is not unfounded. Nay, I cannot be so uncandid as to believe that even the Ministers themselves think them true. The charge upon his Majesty's Ministers is of so serious a kind, that I do not pronounce it lightly.... The great prominent feature of the speech is, that it is an intolerable calumny on the people of Great Britain; an insinuation of so gross and so black a nature, that it demands the most rigorous enquiry, and the most severe punishment. The next assertion is, that there exists at this moment an insurrection in this kingdom. An insurrection! Where is it? Where has it reared its head? Good God! An insurrection in Great Britain! No wonder that the Militia were called out, and Parliament assembled... but where is it?.... The speech goes on in the same strain of calumny and falsehood....

Fox's speech stands high in the annals of Parliamentary oratory and proved, in fact, the opening of what his admirers have always considered the noblest and most useful part of his career. He was outvoted, it is true, by 290 against 50;[3] two days later his appeal to

[1] Cf. *The Senator*, vi, 25: "I have heard of a tumult at Shields; of another at Leith; of some riot at Yarmouth, and of something of the same nature at Perth and Dundee. I ask gentlemen if they believe that in each of these places the avowed object of the complaints of the people was not the real one; that the sailors at Shields, Yarmouth, &c., did not really want some increase of their wages, but were actuated by design of overthrowing the constitution." This is an extract from Fox's speaking on December 13, 1792.

[2] *Ibid.*, 24–5.

[3] Cf. *Diaries and Correspondence of the first Earl of Malmesbury*, ii, 476: "Of these 50, 21 were reformers, 4 Lord Lansdowne's members, and the rest personally attached to Fox, and who, from this feeling, and *against their sentiments*,

Ministers to send an envoy to Paris was disregarded though, as he claimed, it might have averted war; and, throughout the Session, his views on all matters from the Aliens and Traitorous Correspondence Bills to the February declaration of war seemed powerless to affect Government's course. Yet Fox's attitude had its importance outside Parliament. For one thing, it encouraged the Friends of the People to announce publicly their determination to continue with the preparations for a Parliamentary Reform motion in 1793. For another thing, it stimulated the Reforming societies to persevere, despite the prosecutions for seditious speaking or writing that the Associations against Republicans and Levellers were threatening or planning. The decisive condemnation of Paine, pronounced on December 18th by a Guildhall special jury examining the Crown's allegations against the *Rights of Man, Second Part*, was specially helpful to the Associations for, if Paine was now beyond their reach in France, they proved able, in the course of 1793, to make any attempted selling of his works highly dangerous. Newspaper writers and owners were made to suffer, too, as were publicans, who allowed "republican societies" to meet on their premises.[1] Yet despite this concentration of the law upon Radical activities, many of the Societies continued an almost defiant activity. The senior Society of them all was the London Society for Constitutional Information, and the example set by this Society is worth attention. On January 18, 1793 "Citizen St. André, a Member of the National Convention of France" was elected an Honorary Member, and the information was ordered to be published in the newspapers. Next week Citizens Barrère and Roland were similarly honoured, and, on February 1st, it was ordered that some of the new Honorary Members' Convention speaking should be entered upon the Constitutional Society's books and the

voted with him. Such were Crewe, Lord Edward Bentinck, Lord George Cavendish, Lord Milton, Lionel Damer, and others. Some of them, from an excess of good nature in Lord Fitzwilliam, and the Duke of Portland, voted at their particular request, in order to avoid, if possible, and as long as possible, an irreparable breach with Fox, and to leave open for him a door to return. Friday and Saturday Fox held the same violent language as on Thursday, and on Saturday he moved to acknowledge the French Republic, and to send a Minister there. Several of his old friends declared against him on their legs, and he did not venture to divide the House."

[1] Cf. *Proceedings of the Association . . . against Republicans and Levellers*, No. 1, p. 14, for a warning even to newsvendors: "That a caution be hereby given to all sellers of Newspapers, Newscarriers, persons delivering hand-bills for club-meetings and the like that if such papers are seditious or treasonable, *they* are also guilty, equally with the original publisher, printer or author. . . ."

world informed of the fact.[1] This was not the most prudent way, as it proved, of averting Anglo-French war, for it tended to convince the suspicious in Britain of the existence of French plots and to persuade the sanguine in France that a popular pro-French rising might be expected if Pitt ventured to fight them.[2] Yet if the Reformers' conduct lacked prudence, it did not lack courage.

[1] From the Minutes of the Society as reproduced in Appendix C of the *Second Report from the Committee of Secrecy appointed by the House of Commons* (1794).

[2] Cf. *New Annual Register*, 1793, Public Papers, p. 67, for the French note even of December 17, 1792: "Such a war would really be the war of the British ministry only against the French republic; and should this truth appear for a moment doubtful, it would not perhaps be impossible for France to render it soon evident. . . ."

"When Mr. Burke adverted to the [Aliens] bill immediately before the house, he said he would give it his most cordial support, as being calculated to keep out of England those murderous atheists, who would pull down the state and church, religion and God, morality and happiness. The extraordinary power it would give ministers was necessary, and even proved the people who gave it to be free. The bill, he observed, was intended to drive out of this country murderers and assassins. He mentioned the circumstance of three thousand daggers having been bespoken at Birmingham by an Englishman, of which seventy had been delivered. It was not ascertained how many of these were to be exported, and how many were intended for home consumption. (Here Mr. Burke, in a theatrical attitude, drew from his coat a dagger, which he had kept concealed, and with much vehemence of action threw it on the floor). This, said he, pointing to the dagger, is what you are to gain by an alliance with France. . . . I vote, said he, for the present bill, because I consider it as the means of having saved my life, and all our lives, from the hands of assassins. When they smile, I see blood trickling down their face; I see their insidious purpose; I see that the object of all their cajoling is blood. . . ."

Burke on the Aliens Bill, December 28, 1792.

"We find the nation involved in a war, by which, in the course of one campaign, immense numbers of our countrymen have been slaughtered; a vast expence has been incurred; our trade, our commerce and manufactures are almost destroyed, and many of our manufacturers and artists are ruined, and their families starving.

"To add to our affliction, we have reason to expect, that other taxes will soon be added to the intolerable load of imposts and impositions with which we are already overwhelmed. . . .

"We, too, associate in order to obtain a fair, free, and full representation of the people in a house of real national representatives. . . . Can you believe, that those who send virtuous Irishmen and Scotchmen fettered with felons to Botany Bay, do not meditate and will not attempt to send us after them? . . . We must now chuse at once either liberty or slavery for ourselves and our posterity. Will you wait till

barracks are erected in every village, and till *subsidized* Hessians and Hanoverians are upon us? . . ."

From the London Corresponding Society's *Address to the People of Great Britain and Ireland*, adopted January 20, 1794 (100,000 copies ordered).

"In speaking to Baron Hardenberg, I expressed not only my surprise, but my indignation. . . . I applied to him, as to a man of honour and of experience in business . . . and requested him, as his duty, to write immediately to the King of Prussia, (wherever he was), to urge in my name, speaking under the direct commands of my Royal Master, an immediate compliance with the stipulations of the Treaty. . . . I told Baron Hardenberg that I need not observe, besides the political coolness which it would inevitably create, what a disgrace it would be for His Prussian Majesty to have received such immense sums as those already in his possession, and afterwards to hesitate as to the part he was to act. . . ."

Prussian bad faith to England and Holland reported home by Lord Malmesbury, June 27, 1794.

It can hardly be said that the French National Convention helped its British (or Irish)[1] admirers by the nature of its policy during the winter of 1792–3. The execution of Louis XVI on January 21st deeply shocked the great mass of the British nation, and it was followed on February 1st by the short-sighted declaration of war on Britain and Holland. It was doubtless true that the British Foreign Office and Government had hardly treated the French Republic as a legitimate Government, and that Britain's attitude in regard to Dutch rights on the Scheldt had been provokingly inflexible. But the French declaration of war merely proved to most people in Britain that Ministers' dislike and suspicion of the new authorities in France had been thoroughly justified. The invasion and attempted revolutionisation of Holland, that followed, completed Britain's antagonisation, and Pitt shed his last doubts about the wisdom of joining a monarchical crusade against the French Republican aggressors.

Fox, meanwhile, had, ever since Parliament met on December 13th, been urging the reality of the French Republic's grievances against the British Foreign Office.[2] At the cost of great abuse and more than half his Parliamentary following, he had probably made it impossible for the British Government to undertake even precautionary anti-French action on the European continent until after the French declaration of war. Even after the French declaration, Fox undertook, on February 12th, a recapitulation of the French grievances and a suggestion of pacification. On February 18th he made a bitter attack on the rapacious Partition of Poland being undertaken, at that very moment, by two of the Powers with whose aid Ministers were proposing to teach the niceties of international behaviour to the French Republicans. Foreseeing, indeed, the inevitable, he went on to move a string of resolutions, the most important of which was aimed at preventing the Government from surrendering its right of separate negotiation

[1] The United Irishmen, founded in 1791, were already a source of concern, and their agitation, doubtless, one of the reasons for offering the Catholic gentry and clergy of Ireland the considerable Catholic Relief legislation passed at Dublin during 1793.

[2] Cf. *The Senator or Clarendon's Parliamentary Chronicle*, vi, for Fox's speaking on December 13th (p. 32), December 14th (pp. 46–51), December 15th (p. 56), etc., etc. He had been helped in the Lords by the ex-Prime Minister, Lord Lansdowne, who, on December 21st, argued, as Fox had done the previous day in the Commons, that Louis XVI's life could be saved by the right kind of action in Britain.

with France in virtue of the terms of any monarchical league that might be formed for joint operations against France.[1] And though the House rejected Fox's resolutions by 270 votes against 44, a certain constraining effect on Government's diplomacy for the next few weeks must probably be allowed them especially as Fox's constant reminders of the cost and dangers of war underwent prompt exemplification in the onset of an alarming commercial crisis.[2] There is certainly little evidence of Government's eagerness for a Coalition to invade France even after the French defeats of March had been followed by disorderly Republican retreats from Holland and Belgium. Only after General Dumouriez had failed to win his beaten armies for a policy of restoring peace and the limited French Monarchy of 1791, did Pitt resign himself to the necessity of organising an invasion of France in concert with the "despots" of the Continent.

It would, perhaps, be enlightening to see how the diplomatic situation of April 1793 appeared in the eyes of active British Radicals. One of the most active and zealous of the Radical societies was the Sheffield Constitutional Society, and on April 12th, in the midst of a Parliamentary Reform agitation of which more later, it diverted part of its energy to a Peace effort for which it sought to win the help of other Societies. Here are the resolutions adopted at Sheffield on April 12th and circulated among other Societies:[3]

Resolved, That peace is the blessing, and war the curse and scourge of nations; and that the present war is destructive of the

[1] Cf. *The Senator*, vi, 347–8: "That it is the duty of his Majesty's Ministers on the present crisis, to advise his Majesty against entering into any engagements which may prevent Great Britain from making a separate peace . . . or which may countenance an opinion in Europe, that his Majesty is acting in concert with other powers for the unjustifiable purpose of compelling the people of France, to submit to a form of Government not approved by that nation."

[2] Cf. *New Annual Register*, 1793, British and Foreign History, p. 73: "a general paralysis appeared to seize the country; and the number of bankruptcies exceeded all that had ever happened in the most calamitous times. An immense number of families were reduced to beggary and ruin; the manufacturers [operatives] in several of the most flourishing towns were reduced to desperation."

[3] Cf. Appendix E, *Second Report from the Committee of Secrecy* (1794), for a copy of the printed letter sent out from Sheffield on April 24th: "I am desired by the Committee of this Society to transmit you the annexed resolutions, and to ask the opinion of your Society, whether it may not be expedient for all the Societies in Great Britain to adopt similar resolutions, and to fix on a stated time to follow them up with petitions or remonstrances, or both against the present impolitic and ruinous war? . . ."

happiness, commerce, and liberties of this country; that our manufacturers and merchants already deplore its wretched effects; and that nothing short of an immediate peace can save this country from ruin.

Resolved, That as the motives alledged by the executive magistrate for conducting war against the Republic of France no longer exist, we deem it improper that a defensive war should be converted into an offensive war. . . .

Resolved, That as our ally is by public authority declared to be no longer in danger, as her [Dutch] towns are repaired and garrisoned, and as the re-conquest of the Belgic provinces form a potent barrier to any present project of invasion on the part of the French, it is our opinion that the British troops ought to be recalled.

Resolved, That as an alliance with the kingdom of France was considered by William Pitt as of the greatest importance to the commerce and happiness of this country, it is the opinion of this Society that it ought to be renewed with the Republic of France, more especially to prevent the ambitious views of those confederate despots who, at Pilnitz and Pavia, agree to share the remnant of Poland, the spoil of France and of European Turkey.

Peace cries were ultimately destined to cause Government grave disquiet, but for the time being, the Radical manifestations that were causing the greatest uneasiness turned on Parliamentary Reform. Two remarkable Reports on the *State of the Representation* had been issued, in February, by the Foxite Friends of the People, and the Scottish Report, like the English, had been full of the most obviously authentic detail on Parliamentary elections and Parliamentary majorities. Borough patrons, for example, had been set down by name and the conclusion reached that 71 Peers and the Treasury returned 170 members to Parliament while 139 more were returned by 91 Commoners. Or treated another way, the figures had been found to reveal that 11,057 English voters enjoyed a representation by 257 M.P.s and that 2643 Scottish voters were entitled to return, among them, all Scotland's 45 members.[1] There was, of course, much else of the most absorbing interest in the Reports, and the Radical societies could hardly have found reading more to their taste than, say, the accounts given of typical election expenditure in bringing voters to the poll and "entertaining" them coming, going and at the polling-place. Whether on such matters or a variety of others, from the tricks of hostile Returning Officers to the ruinous expense attending an

[1] Wyvill's *Political Papers*, iii, Appendix, 189–269, for a reprint of the Reports.

Election Petition, Foxite politicians spoke from an experience that could not be brushed aside in Parliament as plausibly as was a Nottingham Reform petition, signed by 2500 inhabitants and presented on February 21st.[1] It is clear why the Radical societies, when organising a simultaneous Reform demonstration by Parliamentary petition, endeavoured to have their petitions presented just before or, even on the very day, that Grey made his promised motion for Parliamentary Reform. As the Session worked out, that day turned out to be May 6th.

The petitions of May 1793 are worth a little attention. On May 2nd the Yorkshire member, Duncombe, presented a Sheffield petition with 8000 signatures. It was found "disrespectful" enough for reception to be refused by 108 votes against 29. A similar fate overtook a Birmingham petition with 2720 signatures presented just afterwards by the Foxite Whitbread.[2] But better fortune attended the third Reform petition of the day presented by Lambton, who had apparently had greater success than his brother-members in persuading petitioners to refrain from the unguarded language that would play into the hands of the opponents of Reform in Parliament. Certainly the petition from "a great number of persons in the city of Durham and its neighbourhood" was "received".

The petitions of May 2nd were completely outdone by those of May 6th. On that day there were presented a London and Westminster petition with 6000 signatures,[3] a Norwich petition with 3700, a Huddersfield petition with 1000 and further petitions from Derby, Poole, Aldgate, Warwick and Nottingham. But these English petitions were outnumbered by those from Scotland which sent, alongside a particularly huge one from Edinburgh,[4] others from Paisley, Montrose, Kilmarnock, Newmills, Perth County, Dumbarton, Irvine, Strathaven, Roxburgh, Linlithgow and Anstruther. After these petitions had been presented Grey, armed with yet another from the Friends of the People, opened a two days' Reform debate on the motion to refer

[1] Cf. *The Senator or Clarendon's Parliamentary Chronicle* under February 21, 1793. Reception of the petition was refused by 109 votes against 21.

[2] Cf. *New Annual Register*, 1793, British and Foreign History, p. 110. The division in this case was 102 against 24.

[3] This seems to have been the petition of the London Corresponding Society with a list of signatures headed by its Secretary, Thomas Hardy. Hardy was attacked during the debate by Lord Mornington, the later Marquess Wellesley.

[4] Cf. *New Annual Register*, 1793, British and Foreign History, p. 111, for the petition's stretching "the whole length of the floor of the house".

the petitions to a Committee. The motion was rejected on May 7th by 282 votes against 41, and if such figures were naturally depressing to the friends of Reform in Parliament, they hardly seem to have dismayed or weakened the Radical societies outside. New Reform societies were, indeed, still being founded, one at Tewkesbury, for example, which first entered into touch with metropolitan reformers in July, and another at Coventry whose organisation was not reported until August.[1]

Among the Radical societies, the London Corresponding Society, founded in January 1792 by the shoemaker-shopkeeper, Thomas Hardy, displayed particular activity. Attracting hundreds of London artisans by its bold policy of Universal Suffrage and Annual Parliaments, it was building a network of "local divisions" through the capital with a Central Committee of Delegates to guide the Society as a whole.[2] It had already begun to replace the middle-class Constitutional Information Society as the metropolitan oracle of Reform, looked to by the most zealous provincial Societies, when, on July 30th, it sent the following description of its activities to the Leeds Constitutional Society:[3]

To return to ourselves; we have made a stand against the place and pension Clubs [The Societies against Republicans and Levellers?]; we have been abused in the Senate, calumniated in public, persecuted in private, and worried out of public houses; yet we continue meeting numerously entire . . . and our doctrine makes numerous proselytes, and greatly increases the number of those who may with truth be styled the Friends of their country in particular, and of mankind in general. We petitioned Parliament, and they were forced to admit our Petition, although they would not grant what it required; in short, we strengthen so much, that on the 8th of this month we had a General Meeting of the Society at the Crown and Anchor Tavern . . . and . . . having limited the number of admission tickets to 700, many who had been dilatory in providing themselves were unavoidably excluded.

Enclosed you have copies of our Petition to Parliament, of our two first Addresses, of our correspondence with Mr. Francis, of Mr. Wharton's motion in the House of Commons on the 31st May, and of the Address to the Nation, and of the Resolutions we published at our General Meeting. You will therein discover all that we wish to obtain, and what we will fully obtain ere we cease to be a Society. . . .

[1] Cf. Appendix E, *Second Report from the Committee of Secrecy*, Letters of July 6, and August 20, 1793, as reproduced for the Commons in June 1794.

[2] Add. MSS. (British Museum) 27814, f. 100, for the twenty-four divisions already reported towards the end of 1792.

[3] From Appendix E, *Second Report from the Committee of Secrecy*, which reproduced the full letter for the Commons in June 1794.

Such organisation as this in the very capital was destined to become a greater anxiety to Government than the occasional bookseller, vending the *Rights of Man*, or the exceptional utterer of strong language against King George, who were the normal subjects of official attention so far. But it was the Scottish Reform movement, with its unexpected attraction for so large a part of Scotland's working population, that evoked the most notable of the early State Trials. It was on August 30th that the gifted and enterprising young advocate, Thomas Muir, was put on trial at Edinburgh for activity that included, among other things, a visit to Paris the previous winter for purposes that Government suspected though Muir held stoutly to his story that one of his motives had been the desire to save Louis XVI's life. A summary of Muir's indictment provides as good a short picture as any of the Scottish agitation and has every justification here:[1]

"The prisoner," says a contemporary account, "in the indictment, was accused of wickedly and feloniously exciting, in November last, at different meetings at Kirkintilloch, Campsie, &c. denominated societies for reform, by means of seditious speeches and harangues, a spirit of disloyalty and disaffection to the king and the established government—of advising and exhorting persons to purchase and peruse seditious and wicked publications and writings, (viz. Paine's Works, *A Declaration of Rights*, *The Patriot*, &c.) calculated to produce a spirit of disloyalty and disaffection to the king and government—of distributing or circulating a seditious writing or publication of the tendency aforesaid . . . of producing and reading aloud, in a public meeting or convocation of persons, a seditious and inflammatory writing (viz. *An Address from the Society of United Irishmen in Dublin, to the Delegates for promoting a Reform in Scotland*) tending to produce in the minds of the people a spirit of insurrection . . . and publicly approving of and recommending, in the said meeting, such seditious and inflammatory writing. . . ."

The brutal sentence of fourteen years' transportation, passed on Muir, seems to have shocked some who were by no means squeamish, and the next Scottish State Trial, that of the Rev. T. F. Palmer at Perth on September 17th, ended in the lighter sentence of

[1] *New Annual Register*, 1793, Principal Occurrences, pp. 31–2. A Scottish Judge, Lord Cockburn, carefully re-examined all surviving material in his *Examination of the Trials for Sedition in Scotland* which should be consulted. His two volumes are one long indictment of what the Scottish Courts and Judges presumed to do—sometimes, as when they interpreted the Old Scots "banishment" by Botany Bay transportation, well beyond any moderate interpretation of their powers.

seven years' transportation. Palmer's alleged offence had been the publication and circulation of a "seditious" *Address* adopted, in July, by the Dundee Society of the Friends of Liberty. The *Address* is interesting as combining, with advocacy of "Liberty" and Parliamentary Reform, a manner of attack on the French war which Authority doubtless already saw reason to oppose. Here are some extracts:[1]

In spite of the virulent scandal, or malicious efforts of the people's enemies, we will tell you whole truths. That portion of liberty you once enjoyed is fast setting, we fear, in the darkness of despotism and tyranny! Too soon, perhaps, you who were the world's envy, as possesst of some small portion of liberty, will be sunk in the depth of slavery and misery, if you prevent it not by your well-timed efforts. . . .

We have done our duty, and are determined to keep our posts, ever ready to assert our just rights and privileges as men, the chief of which we account the right of universal suffrage, in the choice of those who serve in the Commons House of Parliament, and frequent renewal of such power.

We are not deterred, or disappointed by the decision of the House of Commons concerning our petition. . . . Far from being discouraged, we are more and more convinced, that nothing can save this nation from ruin, and give to the people that happiness which they have a right to look for under government, but a Reform in the House of Commons. . . .

You are plunged into a war by a wicked ministry and a compliant parliament, the end and design of which is almost too horrid to relate—the destruction of a *whole people, merely because they will be free.* By it your commerce is sore cramped, and almost ruined. Thousands and tens of thousands of your fellow-citizens, from being in a state of prosperity, are reduced to a state of poverty, misery, and wretchedness. A list of bankruptcies, unequalled in any former times, forms a part in the retinue of this Quixotic expedition. Your taxes, great and burthensome as they are, must soon be greatly augmented. Your treasure is wasting fast. The blood of your brethren is pouring out; and all this, to form chains for a free people, and eventually to rivet them for ever on ourselves. . . .

It took courage, after the sentences inflicted on Muir and Palmer, for Skirving, Secretary of the Friends of the People at Edinburgh, to prepare to gather a Convention of Delegates of Reform societies even more ambitious than the conventions previously held in December 1792 and May 1793. Doubtless, the thought of Muir and Palmer in chains, awaiting transport to convict hulks in the Thames before further dispatch to Botany Bay,

[1] *New Annual Register*, 1793, Principal Occurrences, pp. 37–8.

helped the Scottish societies to resolution as, indeed, it helped the English societies whose aid, in the shape of Delegates, had been summoned to Edinburgh for October 29th. Something of what resulted shall be told in the words of a Committee of Secrecy which reported in 1794 to the full House of Commons:[1]

From the papers produced to the Committee, it appears that this Convention did accordingly assemble at Edinburgh, on the 28th of October last, to the number of about 150 persons; and after sitting four days, in the hope of being joined by the Delegates from England, they separated, in the apprehension that the English Delegates did not mean to attend—Two days afterwards Margarot and Gerald (of the London Corresponding Society), with two other persons, one of them a Delegate from the London Society for Constitutional Information, and the other a Delegate from Sheffield, arrived in Edinburgh. Skirving immediately called together a new Convention, to meet upon the 19th of November; and in an advertisement inserted in . . . the *Edinburgh Gazeteer*, and by hand-bills, strongly urged the necessity of the Delegates throughout Scotland attending. . . .

About the 4th or 5th of November Messrs. Hamilton Rowan and Butler, Members of the Society of United Irishmen of Dublin, arrived at Edinburgh . . . during the week they remained in that place, they, with the English delegates, attended the meeting of the General Committee of the Convention. . . .

This Convention accordingly met on the 19th of November, to the number of about 160, and a rather greater proportion of Country Delegates than before. Rowan and Butler were by this time returned to Ireland. But the English Delegates remained, and regularly attended. . . .

Something important had undoubtedly been done in this gathering of a Convention, which had real claims to speak for a large proportion of the lower classes of Scotland and England and enjoyed, besides, the blessings of Ireland. Possibly the wisest as well as the safest thing for the assembled Delegates to have undertaken would have been the organisation of nation-wide petitioning on behalf of Muir and Palmer before they were sent overseas.[2] But the success with which a widely representative Convention had been gathered possibly went to some Delegates' heads and so,

[1] What is quoted is, perhaps, the most revealing section of the *Second Report from the Committee of Secrecy*.

[2] Cf. *New Annual Register*, 1793, Principal Occurrences, pp. 45–6, under December 1st: "Mr. Thomas Muir and the Reverend T. F. Palmer arrived in the River from Leith. . . . Orders were sent down for delivering them into the custody of . . . the contractor for the hulks at Woolwich. . . . They are in irons among the convicts, and were ordered yesterday to assist them in the common labour. . . ."

perhaps, did the more encouraging war-news from France where victory was once again turning to the Republican side. Instead of presenting to the world as the centre of its activity a humane petitioning effort, which the Crown would have found it difficult to challenge, the Convention was persuaded to take on the airs of a legitimate Parliament of French Republican style. And not content with that, it ultimately went on to play right into the Crown's hands by authorising a Secret Committee to prepare quasi-rebellion if Government made the half-expected announcement of certain legislative or military measures, perilous to "liberty". But the Commons' Committee of Secrecy, appointed in 1794, may be left to tell the story in its own words:[1]

During the three first days, the Convention appears, from its Minutes, to have chiefly employed itself on matters of form; but having, on the 22nd of November 1793, changed its title to that of "The British Convention of Delegates of the People, associated to obtain Universal Suffrage and Annual Parliaments", they, in almost every particular, assumed the stile and mode of proceeding adopted by the National Convention of France. They divided themselves into Sections, Committees of Organisation, Instructions, Finance and Secrecy; denominated their Meetings Sittings; granted Honours of Sittings; made honourable mention in their Minutes of Patriotic Donations; entered their Minutes as made in the First Year of the British Convention. . . .

Having at last, on the 28th of November, with peculiar solemnity, passed a Resolution, which necessarily attracted the attention of the Law Officers of the Crown, the ring-leaders, with all their papers, were seized early on the morning of December 5th. . . . The Resolution alluded to . . . was discovered amongst the papers of the Delegate from the Society for Constitutional Information in London, and is of the following tenor:

. . . That this Convention, considering the calamitous consequences of any Act of the Legislature, which may tend to deprive the whole or any part of the people of their undoubted right to meet, either by themselves or by delegation, to discuss any matter relative to their common interest . . . do hereby declare, before God and the world, that we shall follow the wholesome example of former times, by paying no regard to any Act which shall militate against the Constitution.

And we do resolve, That the first notice given for the introduction of a Convention Bill, or any Bill of a similar tendency to that passed in Ireland in the last Session. . . .

Or any Bill for the Suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act, or the Act for preventing wrongous Imprisonment . . . in North Britain.

[1] From the *Second Report from the Committee of Secrecy.*

Or in case of an invasion, or the admission of any foreign troops whatsoever into Great Britain or Ireland;

All or any one of these calamitous circumstances shall be a signal to the several Delegates to repair to such place as the Secret Committee of this Convention shall appoint. . . .

The Law Officers of the Crown had apparently had their own sources of information as to the Convention's proceedings[1] and had permitted its incautious leaders to touch the very verge of treason before making their pounce on Skirving of Edinburgh and Gerrald and Margarot of London. Margarot, in fact, a widely-travelled man of business turned political adventurer, seems to have suspected that something was amiss for, on December 4th, he carried a motion in the Convention which would have made the "illegal dispersion" of the gathering the signal for the Secret Committee to begin work. Indeed, the arrested men's friends were bold enough to declare the Convention "in permanent session" on the very day of their seizure, and, when dispersed by the city authorities, tried to meet next day in the suburbs. This time it was the County Sheriff who dispersed them and, though no further action of the kind proved necessary against the "British Convention", Authority later claimed there was evidence of private meetings and "secret correspondence" even in the middle of 1794. There had certainly been very bold manifestations in Edinburgh during January, presumably intended to help Skirving and Margarot at their trials. But the handbills, posters and street-crowds failed to prevent sentences of fourteen years' transportation being inflicted on the preacher-like Skirving and the more winning Margarot,[2] and it was the same sentence which was passed in March on Gerrald.

[1] Cf. *New Annual Register*, 1794, Principal Occurrences, pp. 53–4, for the admission forced from Henry Dundas, Lord Advocate and Secretary of State, at a treason trial, that he had received information as to the Friends of the People from one of their own committeemen, Robert Watt, who had been paid £30. As Dundas denied having seen Watt after October 1793, there were presumably other traitors in the Reform camp.

[2] Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 4, for the popularity Margarot had quickly won in Edinburgh where, on the morning his trial was expected "a vast crowd assembled in front of the Black Bull Inn, where Maurice Margarot lodged. He shortly after came out attended by three friends . . . the mob forced all four into a chaise, which they had provided, and from which they had previously taken the horses. This done, they immediately drew the carriage to Parliament Close. . . . Mr. Margarot, on his way home, was again forced into a carriage by the mob, along with five of his friends, and the horses being taken from the coach, the mob drew him to his lodgings. . . ."

After Parliament met on January 21, 1794 the harsh proceedings of the Scottish Courts became the subject of persistent complaint and criticism from the Opposition. Moreover, as the Session wore on, Ministers had good reason to know that there was a good deal of public support for Opposition's dislike to the war, the Poland-partitioning Allies, the Hessian troops landed in this country and the French *émigré* troops put upon the British Budget. In March, for example, a Leicester jury defied judicial admonition when refusing to convict for seditious words[1] while, early in April, a preposterous prosecution broke down disgracefully at Lancaster after an informer was detected in shameful falsehoods against Manchester's leading Reform advocate, Thomas Walker.[2] Yet the more restive the public's temper grew, the more necessary the great majority in Parliament found it to take precautions against those ready, in favourable circumstances, for violence of the French Republican pattern. Dundas, for example, was actually cheered, on March 25th, when, in opposing the third attempt to obtain Reform of the Scottish Law Courts, he refused to accept the suggestion that it would be a good thing if Scottish Law and Procedure in matters of libel were assimilated to those of England where Muir, apparently, would have been guilty at most, of a misdemeanour. When he saw, announced Dundas:[3]

> . . . the attacks that were daily made on the very vitals of the constitution; when he saw this systematically done; when he found that works in their nature hostile to the government of the country, addressed to the lower orders of society, for the purpose of creating discontent among them, were left in cellars and on stairs, dropt in streets, and scattered about on highways and on commons (nay, he found one of them himself on Wimbledon Common the other day); he thought it his duty to say that something must be done to check those practices. These things were carried on, and these sentiments were spread with great assiduity by persons denominating themselves corresponding societies, and other names which gentlemen choose to adorn their meetings; and under all these circumstances, he was ready to say that he was clearly convinced that the punishment hitherto inflicted by the law of England was not sufficiently severe to deter persons from this practice. (A cry of *Hear! hear!*) Mr. Dundas said he would again

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 19, for the original verdict of "Guilty of speaking the words, but not with the seditious intent" which, after three brushes with the Judge, became a full and unanimous "Not Guilty".

[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 19–22. After Dunn, the informer, had been confronted with five witnesses to whom he had confessed prisoner's innocence, the prosecution abandoned the case and the Court ordered Dunn to be committed for perjury.

[3] *Ibid.*, British and Foreign History, p. 40.

repeat it, in order to be well understood—"He was clearly convinced that, on proper inquiry into this subject, it would be found that the law of this country was insufficient in this respect, and that the legislature must proceed in some measure or other different from what the law was at present. . . ."

It seems plain that, whether or not Government had already heard rumours of pikes at Sheffield and Edinburgh, it meant, above all, to put a stop to the activities of the London Corresponding Society and the London Society for Constitutional Information. Of these, the London Corresponding Society had for some time been the more energetic in attempting to lead nation-wide opposition to Government, and it was actually on March 27th, only two days after Dundas's speech, that it appealed to the Constitutional Society to join it in calling a British Convention of Reform Deputies which might "secure ourselves from future illegal and scandalous prosecutions" and "prevent a repetition of wicked and unjust sentences". The Constitutional Society was persuaded to co-operate though not the more august and more cautious Friends of the People, and the next step proved to be a great open-air meeting held at Chalk Farm Green on April 14th under the auspices of the Corresponding Society.[1] Correspondence was read and resolutions were adopted which denounced the Scottish Trials and Government's methods almost in every line, and, finally, it was resolved to order the printing of 200,000 copies of the proceedings. How inflammable, from Government's point of view, was the mass of material which the Corresponding Society proposed to broadcast throughout the country may be judged from two of the resolutions adopted. They ran thus:

That any attempt to violate those yet remaining laws, which were intended for the security of Englishmen against the tyranny of Courts and Ministers, and the corruption of dependent Judges . . . ought to be considered as dissolving entirely the social compact between the

[1] Cf. Add. MSS. (British Museum) 27814, f. 76, for Place on this, the second great open-air meeting called by the Society (the first had been held in a Hackney field on October 24, 1793): "After the business of the meeting was concluded, which lasted upward of five hours, the immense multitude which was called together (independent of the Society) of all descriptions of persons—men and women, hundreds from mere curiosity, the day being very fine—in less than a quarter of an hour that large body left Chalk Farm in the greatest order . . . they seemed all highly satisfied, although they received many insults and provocations from the Bow Street runners and different police officers and Government spies and reporters: yea, from some magistrates. . . ." The Chairman, on this occasion, was the hairdresser, John Lovett.

English nation and their governors; and driving them to an immediate appeal to that incontrovertible maxim of eternal justice, *that the safety of the people is the supreme, and in cases of necessity, the only law.*

That the arming and disciplining in this Country, either with or without the consent of Parliament, any band of *Emigrants and foreigners, driven from their own country for their known attachment to an infamous despotism*, is an outrageous attempt to *overawe and intimidate* the *free* spirit of Britons; to subjugate them to an army of *mercenary* cut-throats, . . . and that *no pretence whatever ought* to induce the people to *submit* to so *unconstitutional* a measure.

The Corresponding Society's resolve to broadcast great masses of this type of "sedition" throughout the country and the Constitutional Society's consent to help in the assembly of a new "British Convention" to denounce and challenge Government, must have clinched Ministers' determination to cow, by a terrible example, all would-be English "traitors". They seem to have been in possession of informers' reports which alleged pike-making at Sheffield and Edinburgh and musketry exercises in London, and with very scanty justification, as it proved, they resolved on charging with treason the most conspicuous figures in the Corresponding and Constitutional Societies. It was on May 12th that the first arrests were made and[1] both Houses informed that the books and papers of the peccant Societies would be laid before them. Next day, Dundas, Secretary of State, brought the promised books and papers, under seal, to Parliament, and Committees of Secrecy were set up, one in the Commons and one in the Lords, to undertake their confidential examination. A *First Report* from the Commons' Committee was ready as early as May 16th, and Pitt, when bringing it up as justification for Government's requiring the suspension of Habeas Corpus,[2] seems deliberately to have painted everything in the darkest colours. But Pitt's alarmism, though sufficient to carry Habeas Corpus Suspension very rapidly through Parliament, did not yet suffice for everything Government had in mind. Certainly, Dundas deemed

[1] Cf. *New Annual Register*, 1794, British and Foreign History, pp. 188–9: "In pursuance of this determination, therefore, on Monday the 12th of May, 1794, Mr. Thomas Hardy, a shoemaker, in Piccadilly, who had acted as secretary to the London Corresponding Society, and Mr. Daniel Adams, the secretary of the society for constitutional information, were apprehended by a warrant from Mr. Dundas, for treasonable practices, and their books and papers seized. Mr. Horne Tooke, Mr. Jeremiah Joyce, preceptor to Lord Mahon, and Mr. John Thelwall . . . political lecturer, were afterwards, in the course of the week, arrested and committed to the Tower on a charge of high treason."

[2] Until February 1, 1795, in the first case.

it wise to ply both Committees of Secrecy with further "information" of a character that procured, early in June, *Second Reports* from Commons and Lords even more alarmist than the *First Reports* had been. The Second Report from the Lords, for example, was decorated with four fearsome pictures of the types of pike with which, according to Dundas, would-be rebels had been preparing to arm themselves.[1] Dundas, however, had omitted to state that practically all the pikes referred to could be traced back to one of his Scottish informers who while playing an elaborate *agent provocateur* game of his own, had fallen into the hands of the authorities. That was to come out in the Law Courts later but, meanwhile, alarmism had it all its own way and, to balance the vague if thrilling matter on Sheffield pikes and Lambeth musketry exercises[2] with which Dundas had had the Commons' *Second Report* embellished, the Lords were provided with additional matter like the following:[3]

> The establishment of a Secret Committee at Edinburgh, invested with full powers to direct the future operations of the Societies throughout Scotland; the regular correspondence privately carried on by means of emissaries despatched to the different towns; the ascertaining the exact number of persons in these Societies, who were directed to provide themselves with arms, and to hold themselves in readiness for any measure which the Secret Committee might in due time

[1] *Appendix to the Second Report from the Committee of Secrecy appointed by the House of Lords.*

[2] The Commons' *Report* had been well packed with accounts or rumours of Sheffield pikes obtained from informers. Here, for example, is one of the forced connections attempted between the pikes and the London Corresponding Society: "In the progress of the enquiry, information was received from a witness, whose accuracy has since been confirmed in a variety of striking instances, that a person named in the information, an active promoter in these measures, and a Delegate of one of the divisions, had shewn the witness a pike in his possession. . . . The witness stated this person to have given an account of the use to which these pikes might be applied; that it was supposed no regiment of horse could stand against them; that such pikes were manufacturing at Sheffield; and that he had received from the Secretary of the Corresponding Society the direction of the person from whom he might procure them; that the price was one shilling a piece. . . . The witness also stated the same person to have given an account of a Meeting intended to be held at a public-house . . . on a day specified, for the purpose of fixing the number of pikes to be sent for." But if this prejudiced and unreliable account omitted such important facts as that the pikes, even the few score at Sheffield, were primarily intended for self-defence, it was no more misleading than the attempt to make the London Corresponding Society responsible for the "musketry exercises" of the Loyal Lambeth Association! These "exercises", it was charged, were carried on indoors (!) by candle-light and a total of sixty muskets was aimed at though only eighteen were ever obtained.

[3] Appendix No. 5 to the *Second Report from the Committee of Secrecy appointed by the House of Lords* quoted, in full, Dundas's latest information.

communicate, are confirmed by every account and information which the Magistrates have received. And an individual, who has been lately taken into custody, has confirmed the account received from a different quarter of the dangerous design, planned by the Edinburgh Committee, of effecting a general insurrection as soon as they were ready . . . by the seizure of the principal Magistrates and officers of the law at midnight, and possessing themselves of the prisons and public offices. . . .

In resisting Habeas Corpus Suspension, Fox had warned the Commons that the "stale, ridiculous and contemptible" matter produced by Ministers to justify the terrifying alarms they had raised, supplied the very reason why they should be refused unlimited powers of arrest and detention. Even supposing a "British Convention" had been collected, desperate enough to undertake a rebellion, Fox doubted whether they would find a hundred followers, and, in any case, he wanted to know why so many alleged offences dating back to 1792 had been left unprosecuted by the ordinary law of the land. He himself volunteered one reason for the sudden demand for Habeas Corpus Suspension when he pointed out that it would leave at Ministers' mercy "every man who talked freely, every man, who like him, from his heart, detested the war". There was doubtless something in Fox's suspicion, though Ministers' were temporarily saved from troublesome home-difficulties about the war by the outburst of popular pleasure that followed the naval victory of "the Glorious First of June".[1] This naval victory, too, may have helped Ministers in a way Fox apparently thought unlikely to the end. Fox was aware that "the old Whigs" under the Duke of Portland approved the war and even Habeas Corpus Suspension but he had reason to believe that Portland was, like Fox himself, firmly committed never to take office under Pitt. If Fox had been Leader of the Commons for the Government that Pitt and the King had "unconstitutionally" destroyed in 1783, Portland had been its Prime Minister. And for ten years the ex-Ministers had stood together in

[1] Cf. *The Farington Diary*, under June 11th, 12th and 13th, for the three successive nights of window-illumination undertaken in London after news of the battle had come in. In a fleet action, fought between 26 French battle-ships and 25 British, six French ships were captured and two sunk without a single British ship lost. The victory, however, looked somewhat less profitable when the French claim came in and it was understood that the French battleships' action had allowed a great victualling fleet of 116 sail to reach French harbours safely from America with the food that would end the danger of famine in France.

insisting that the first need of domestic politics was the undoing of the royal coup d' état of 1783 by the removal of Pitt from the Prime Ministership.

Portland, however, had been forced for some time to make concessions to those of his followers who were hungriest for office, and Pitt, on his side, had shown himself ready for every "reasonable" accommodation by awarding to one of Portland's friends the great prize of the Lord Chancellorship and to another the Viceroyalty of Corsica.[1] Apparently the "Glorious First of June" had its part, like the alleged plots of the British Jacobins, in finally persuading Portland to consider it to be his duty to abandon Fox and to take office under Pitt.[2] On July 11th, the day of Parliament's prorogation, Portland gave up a struggle of over ten year's duration and accepted the Home Secretaryship and the charge of internal order. With him he brought into the Cabinet Rockingham's nephew and heir, Earl Fitzwilliam, a further representative of the old Whig connexion in Earl Spencer and, finally, him whom Burke regarded as his political successor, William Windham, the new Secretary-at-War.[3]

[1] *New Annual Register*, 1793, put Lord Loughborough's appointment as Lord Chancellor at January 28, 1793, and Sir Gilbert Elliot's admission to the Privy Council at September 25th.

[2] Cf. *Farington Diary*, under August 10, 1794: "Mr. Peach said that not more than 6 weeks ago the Duke of Portland said He wd. never make part of an administration unless Fox was of the number—Fox would not believe till it was absolutely settled that the Duke, &c., would join the administration."

[3] Cf. *New Annual Register*, 1794, Promotions, p. 73. See also Fortescue MSS., ii, 595–7, for last-minute problems of reconciling Portland to Dundas's being left in charge of the War Department by attaching the colonial correspondence to Portland's sphere. The dismay of some of Pitt's old colleagues at the great concessions made to the Portland connection will be found mentioned in *Diaries and Correspondence of the Rt. Hon. George Rose*, i, 193–6. On the other hand, the once-famous *Enquiry into the Duties of Men in the Higher and Middle Classes* of the Rev. T. Gisborne (1794) despite dislike of "factious orators", had warned Pitt to base his Parliamentary conduct on the view that "the time may come, and perhaps ere long, when the welfare of his country may indispensably require him to unite with some of those very men, who are now drawn up in array against him". Such words, repeated in the third edition (1795), may imply that the possible need for a further widening of the Coalition was already foreseen.

THE WAR GROWS MORE BURDENSOME, 1794–5

"We call our countrymen and our readers to witness, that, at the risk of some unpopularity, we were the first to raise our voices against the present war. We proved from unquestionable documents, that it might have been avoided with honour and with safety by the British ministry. We deprecated its calamities, and we predicted them. . . .

". . . At that crisis the prosperity of Britain was unexampled; her commerce was extended over the whole face of the ocean; the trade of the universe was in her grasp. Her manufactures pervaded every country; and if there was a complaint, it was for a lack of hands to conduct them with sufficient dispatch. By following the suggestions of that excellent patriot, and incomparable financier, the late Dr. Price, the minister (though, of three plans presented, he adopted the worst)—had, according to his own calculations, liquidated nearly twenty millions of the national debt. In this state of things, what fatal insanity, what inexplicable infatuation could engage a ministry to involve the nation again in the ruinous vortex of continental warfare? . . .

"The year 1795 concluded with little consolatory abroad, and with a general and torpid despondency at home. . . . The meeting of parliament was fixed for an unusually early period, the latter end of October; and previous to its assembling, some meetings were held by the London Corresponding Society for the avowed purpose of petitioning the king and parliament in favour of peace and reform. As the meetings were held in the open fields, they were numerously attended. . . .

"A dreadful and oppressive scarcity at this crisis pervaded the kingdom; . . . and the poor were everywhere despairing and desperate. To the calamitous war, and to the misconduct of ministers, all the misery under which the nation suffered was (perhaps rashly) attributed. From these circumstances we must account for the daring and detestable insults and outrages which were offered to his majesty on his way to and from the house of lords on the 29th of October. . . .

"As we have already intimated [these outrages were] by some considered as a conspiracy on the part of the Corresponding Society; and on the other hand, the accusation was retorted on their adversaries by the adherents of that society. . . . They observe, that, according to the unguarded admissions of

Mr. secretary Dundas, the bills, which were immediately upon this event introduced into parliament for restricting the liberty of the press, and for preventing public meetings, had been in the contemplation of ministers ever since the failure of the prosecution of Hardy, &c. and that a fair opportunity was wanting to bring them forth. They remark, that in other countries similar outrages have been committed, not by the populace, but by persons hired for particular views. . . ."

The Foxite *New Annual Register*, 1796.

WHEN, in July 1794, Pitt could finally face Britain and the world with the spectacle of full coalition achieved with the Duke of Portland, it was doubtless hoped that advantageous results would follow abroad and at home. Abroad, however, a train of disasters had already begun, destined, in the course of a few months, to put the whole of the Austrian and Dutch Netherlands as well as considerable portions of Western Germany under the control of the French.[1] The Belgian, Dutch and German populations concerned showed little enthusiasm for the fight against the Jacobin "monsters" to which their princes had summoned them. And, worse still, such anti-Jacobin leaders as the Tsaritsa of Russia and the King of Prussia had, in defiance of all their professions and even treaty engagements, turned their back on the war against the Jacobins in order to secure and extend their vast territorial gains from the Partition of Poland. The record of Austria, too, was very far from perfect, and when Englishmen read of their own small Army, retreating through the Netherlands in every circumstance of danger and difficulty, while a thousand miles farther east great monarchical hosts were trampling down the last vestiges of Polish independence, bitterness was amply excusable. Here is one Foxite conclusion, stated in the words of the *New Annual Register*:[2]

The melancholy recital of the unprecedented misfortunes of this gallant and virtuous [Polish] nation cannot fail to suggest some reflexions, not only to the christian, but to the politician also. Abhorring as we do from our hearts the atrocities of the detestable Robespierre and his party in France, we cannot forget that the whole sum of cruelty, oppression, perfidy, and injustice which has been exercised in that country, is not to be compared with those which were practised in Poland by the very persons who were declaiming against the cruelties of the French; we cannot forget that, while the former had a specious excuse (false as we believe it in some instances) arising from the necessity of defending the independence of their country against foreign hostility and domestic treason, the monarchs of Russia and Prussia were without the shadow of a plea for their atrocities; we cannot forget too, that more innocent persons were massacred in one day by the barbarous Russians, than have been sacrificed during the whole of the French revolution by the infamous revolutionary tribunals.... As Englishmen and as christians, we will not dissemble that we sincerely

[1] Francis Plowden's *A Short History of the British Empire during the Year 1794* gives a biting Opposition view of Government's increasing predicament.
[2] *New Annual Register*, 1794, British and Foreign History, pp. 304–5.

regret that any political connexion should exist between this country and savages who have disgraced the name of christian.

At home, the new coalition, invincibly strong though it appeared from the politicians' point of view, had to face disappointments and setbacks as grave as those that overtook it abroad. One of the most damaging of the early blows it received came from the highly curious revelations made at the Edinburgh High Treason trial of September 3rd. It transpired, from the unwilling evidence of Secretary Dundas himself, that Robert Watt, the principal accused, charged with some of the more hair-raising plots "revealed" in May to the Committees of Secrecy, had been an informer in personal touch with Dundas himself.[1] It was Watt's claim that the "plot" for which he had been arrested was a piece of *agent provocateur* work,[2] intended to trap all Government's enemies, and, though he did not escape condemnation and execution, the whole affair did Ministers' reputation little good. Meanwhile the difficulty of finding Army recruits for a war of increasingly unpleasant aspect had led to recruiting methods of a tricky lawlessness that provoked great popular riots in London in the course of which mob-attacks were made on some of London's leading recruiting offices.[3] And, to make matters worse for Government, Portland chose, towards the end of September, to take with the utmost seriousness an account, brought him by an informer, of a "plot" so ludicrously incredible that it was soon christened "the pop-gun plot" by the jeering populace.[4] There could hardly have been a series of mishaps more detrimental to the case Government

[1] Cf. *New Annual Register*, 1794, Principal Occurrences under September 3rd: "The lord advocate then gave an account of this business: He had conversed with the prisoner several times at his own lodgings; and he had at one time given him some information . . . some time after, the prisoner having informed him that he was much pressed for money to discharge a bill of 30l., his lordship . . . sent an order for the payment of it. . . . All this happened previously to the meeting of the convention. . . ."

[2] *Ibid.*: "Mr. Hamilton, counsel for the prisoner, dwelt long on the correspondence between Mr. Dundas and Mr. Watt . . . the prisoner was a spy for government; and it was well known, that a spy was obliged . . . to assume the appearance of those whose secrets he meant to reveal. . . ."

[3] Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 266, for the attacks on the recruiting offices in Holborn, Shoe Lane, Bride Lane, Long Lane, Smithfield, Barbican, Golden Lane, Moorfields, Whitechapel, Clerkenwell and Drury Lane. The public suspected that intoxication and worse was employed as a lure to young men by those financially interested in entrapping them into the service, and that such as awoke sober and protesting were brutally handled. See also Add. (Place) MSS. 35142, ff. 69–70, for crimping houses and their villainies.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 269: "a more ridiculous, inconsistent, and improbable tale never was invented. . . . The charge, supported by the testimony of Upton, was to

was about to present at the High Treason trials of the leaders of the London Corresponding and Constitutional Information Societies. Twelve of them had been charged with treason, and Thomas Hardy, the first to be put on trial for his life, faced his accusers on October 28th. He did so after a close imprisonment that, thanks to Habeas Corpus Suspension, had lasted well over five months.

The verdict of "Not Guilty", returned on Hardy by a Middlesex jury after eight days of Court proceedings, must be taken as implying that middle-class men of business were beginning to question the perfect wisdom of Government's course.[1] Even the letter from a would-be pike-manufacturer in Sheffield, which, to the despair of his counsel,[2] had been found in Hardy's possession, failed to prolong the jury's deliberations for more than two hours and a half, and what made matters worse for Ministers was the tremendous outburst of plebeian rejoicing that followed the verdict.[3]

the following effect: An instrument was to have been constructed by the informer Upton, in the form of a walking-stick, in which was to have been inserted a brass tube of two feet long; through this tube a poisoned dart or arrow was to have been blown . . . at his majesty, either on the terrace at Windsor or in the play-house. . . ."

[1] Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 60, for the jurymen, "Thomas Buck, Back-lane, Acton; Thomas Wood, coal-merchant, Ealing; William Fraser, Queen's-square, Bloomsbury; Adam Steinmetz, biscuit-baker, Limehouse; Newel Conner, distiller, Shadwell; John Marshall, brewer, Shoreditch; Thomas Sayer, distiller, Bow; Richard Carter, Paddington-street; Nathaniel Stonard, brewer, Bromley; Joseph Nicol, farmer, Willesdon; John Charrington; Joseph Ainsley, coal-merchant, St. George's in the East." It is, perhaps, worth adding that jurymen were almost necessarily confined to the "comfortable classes" owing to the composition of the jury-lists from among these with "property qualifications" of various types.

[2] Cf. *Ibid.*, British and Foreign History, pp. 272–3: "The charge which at first appeared to bear most against the prisoner . . . originated in a letter which was found in Hardy's possession, from Richard Davison of Sheffield, containing a proposal to manufacture pikes of a certain dimension, and at a certain price, to defend themselves, as the letter expressed, from the violence of the *aristocrats*. It also appeared that a person of the name of Edwards had inquired of Hardy where he could procure a pike; when he shewed him Davison's letter . . . the charge was cleared up to the entire satisfaction of the jury, by the evidence of the Sheffield witnesses . . . it appeared that the whole had originated from an infamous hand-bill, which had been circulated in the night previous to an intended meeting of the [Sheffield] society, exciting the mob of Sheffield to assemble and maltreat the members. Several of the members therefore came armed to the meeting, and others afterwards provided themselves with pikes. . . ."

[3] Cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 274–6, for evidence that it was not merely plebeians who rejoiced. "Considering the state of parties in this kingdom at the time", said the *New Annual Register*, "we must remark that the joy on Mr. Hardy's acquittal was much more general than we expected. Even those who were evidently adverse to the societies in question appeared to partake in the triumph. There is a wide medium between the approbation of democratical, or even very popular principles, and that of constructive treason. . . ."

At this stage Ministers would have been well-advised to reduce the charge against the rest of the accused to sedition for, on this charge, even Hardy's jury would apparently have convicted.[1] Yet, after the alarms they had raised in the summer, Ministers held themselves bound to try and secure a treason conviction, and, accordingly, the formidable Horne Tooke was put on trial on November 17th, presumably because he was the best-known member of the London Constitutional Society. It was a tremendous mistake. Tooke might have been the stormy petrel of domestic politics ever since his great part in the "Middlesex Elections" of 1768–9 but nothing in his whole record suggested the slightest propensity to treason. He had, in fact, rendered Pitt great services when, in the course of his long private war with Fox for the political control of Westminster, he had issued against the Opposition leader one of the most effective pamphlets of the eighteenth century—the *Two Pairs of Portraits* of 1788.[2] Tooke succeeded in tearing Government's case to shreds when he had Pitt himself summoned and cross-examined on the part they had both taken in the Parliamentary Reform agitation against North. It must have been a particularly bad moment for the Prime Minister when, after he had affected to forget having worked with a convention of Reform delegates in the past, exact details were supplied by Sheridan and a reluctant admission secured. It took the jury merely six minutes of deliberation to find Tooke "Not Guilty", and there were more scenes of public rejoicing that did Ministers little good. Here is one description that indicates how dangerously even middle-class sentiment was affected. According to the *New Annual Register*:[3]

> The jury on the return from the Old Bailey, after their verdict on the trial of Mr. Tooke, had a lane formed for them all the way to the London coffee-house. On their arrival there, the company, who amounted to about five hundred gentlemen, immediately arose, took off their hats, ranged themselves on each side as they passed through, saluting them with the most animated and expressive tokens of applause. One of the jury, speaking for the rest, said, it added highly to the gratification

[1] Cf. H. Jephson, *The Platform*, p. 240: "It was said at the time [of the trial of Hardy and the others] that if the prosecution had been for a seditious conspiracy it must have succeeded. . . ."

[2] The Portraits drawn in the pamphlet had been those of the two Foxes and the two Pitts. Both Pitts had been highly praised and both Foxes strongly condemned. A notorious Westminster by-election had taken place in 1788.

[3] *New Annual Register*, 1794, British and Foreign History, p. 284.

they felt in having conscientiously discharged their duty, to find the verdict they had given so satisfactory to the public at large.

A last attempt was, however, made to secure a conviction against the first of a new species, the "political lecturer", John Thelwall. Ministers possibly hoped that a third jury might be persuaded to take a severer view of one who made his living by selling seats in a lecture-room, devoted to unending and virulent attack upon the "Constitution". But he, too, was acquitted on December 5th, and thereafter Ministers beat one retreat after another. On December 15th the trial of two more members of the London Corresponding Society was abandoned, on December 18th five Sheffield and two London accused were released from custody, and, on January 12, 1795, there was yet another release. Ministers had sustained a series of signal reverses.[1]

Parliament had, meanwhile, been assembled for a new Session on December 30, 1794, and Ministers were called upon not only to meet the expected Opposition demand for the end of Habeas Corpus Suspension but also to reply to strong criticism, from among their own supporters, of a Speech from the Throne supposed to inculcate unending war with the French Republic. It was especially disconcerting to Pitt to find a personal friend of his own like Wilberforce prepared to lead the demand for negotiations with France and ready to base his arguments on Ministers' military failures and the virtual desertion of their continental allies. January gave Opposition further opportunity, for Government's resolve to ask for some continuation of Habeas Corpus Suspension was met by alleged proofs, drawn from the Treason Trials, that the original Suspension had only been obtained by scare-mongering of the most culpable kind. Nor was this the Government's worst trial. While the French were achieving the immense triumph of overrunning and revolutionising Holland in January 1795, Government's opponents in the City of London succeeded in using its municipal machinery to begin what they hoped would become a nation-wide agitation for a "speedy peace".[2] The best

[1] *Ibid.*, 1795, Principal Occurrences, p. 50, for Government's last prosecution on the charges of May 1794. A special jury at the York Assizes of July 1795 enabled Sheffield's "political Lecturer", Henry Yorke, to be imprisoned for two years when the charge against him had been reduced to "seditious words".

[2] Cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 5–7. The peace party, checked in some measure in the Court of Common Council, made its principal demonstration among the Livery assembled in Common Hall. "The hall was uncommonly crowded", runs the report, "and the motion for an application to parliament for peace was

Ministers could do against the peace cry was to bring before Parliament, on February 4th, the Austrian offer to provide 200,000 troops on the Continent if a loan of four millions were made available. The loan was provided as well as far greater sums to meet Britain's own immense war-costs but, as was inevitable, the year's Budget contained proposals for much new taxation. And though some patriotic pride was, perhaps, stirred by Europe's reported astonishment at Britain's ability to spend forty millions a year,[1] Opposition was none the less strengthened by a programme of new imposts on wine, spirits, tea, coffee, raisins, dried fruits, timber, hair-powder, writs, affidavits and insurances. Throughout the remainder of a Session, which continued until June 27th, Ministers' most trying ordeals apparently came when the demand for a "speedy peace" was renewed. Their case for continued war was, they knew, being steadily weakened by the news that one continental power after another was overcoming its scruples about treating with the "Jacobins". By May 27th, for example, when Wilberforce undertook the responsibility of moving formally for peace,[2] Tuscany and Prussia had made their accommodation with the French Republic and the new Dutch authorities and actually signed an alliance.[3]

Amid many chagrins, that included the inevitable military misfortunes and a popular restlessness taking varied and troublesome forms, Ministers could, at least, congratulate themselves on

introduced by Mr. Hodgson, chymist. . . and seconded by Mr. Waithman, linen-draper. . . . The meeting was extremely clamorous whenever any gentleman rose to speak against the motion; but the conduct of the lord mayor cannot be sufficiently praised: addressing the assembly, he said he would not put the question, unless it was fairly discussed . . . by this means order was restored for a short time, but the question being very generally called for, it was carried for a speedy peace by a vast majority. . . ."

[1] Cf. *Annual Register*, 1795, History, pp. 179–80: "The immensity of the sums levied in Great Britain, for the service of the current year, was an object of astonishment to all the European nations: they amounted . . . to forty millions sterling. Neither the annual revenues of Ireland, nor of the West or East Indies made part of this account: and these were computed twelve millions more. . . ."

[2] Cf. *Farington Diary*, under January 9, 1795, for the dismay Wilberforce's attitude had already caused in less critical circumstances. "Great indignation", wrote Farington, "is felt at Wilberforce having joined the opposition or rather at his having moved the amendment. . . . Windham expresses his opinion strongly, & says if miscarriages take place Wilberforce will have been in a great degree the cause. He has by his conduct encouraged our enemies and discouraged our friends."

[3] The Bohn edition of *Blair's Chronological Tables* gives the date of the Tuscan Treaty as February 9th, that of the Prussian Treaty as April 5th, and that of the Dutch Treaty as May 16th.

having kept their Coalition together. This had not, perhaps, been easy, for one of the Ministers, introduced by Portland, had had to be dismissed in sensational circumstances.[1] The Minister concerned had been Earl Fitzwilliam, the Rockingham heir, who had gone to Ireland as Lord-Lieutenant. He had doubtless been chosen in the hope of conciliating the Irish "patriot" party, led by Grattan, who regarded themselves as Whigs and under special obligations to the memory of Fitzwilliam's uncle, Lord Rockingham. The hearty support of the "patriots" would, of course, have been useful to any Government, and there was doubtless some truth, if not all the truth, in their contention that a Catholic Emancipation Bill and a Tithe Bill would end most of the danger that the incipient lawlessness, perceptible throughout Ireland and encouraged from Paris, would end in a national revolt against the British connection. But there were important Irish officials of ability and long experience, who differed from the "patriots" and who believed that the "patriot" policy would merely stimulate Catholic appetite and yet leave Government too weak to repress any lawless manifestations it might attempt. So far from understanding these men or attempting to win them over, Fitzwilliam plunged, most imprudently, into dangerous plans of displacing them for "patriots". Both by encouraging full Emancipation and plunging straightway into a patronage war, Fitzwilliam was going well beyond what King and Cabinet would tolerate, and he received a reminder that caused him to resign and leave Ireland less than three months after he had landed. Yet, despite the fateful errors committed by Fitzwilliam, Pitt was prepared to recommend to the King that he should be allowed to return to his place in the Cabinet. Such readiness to meet Portland's sense of duty towards an unfortunate colleague deserved the rich reward it

[1] Cf. *New Annual Register*, 1795, British and Foreign History, p. 146, for a Foxite account, attempting to make the utmost use of the "revelations", published by the angry Fitzwilliam on his return, in order to disrupt the Coalition. Here are the choicest passages: "In two letters to the Earl of Carlisle, published by lord Fitzwilliam, the latter nobleman has exposed . . . the manner in which the Portland party were 'duped', as he expresses it, in the famous coalition. . . . He states that 'when the duke of Portland and his friends were to be *enticed* into a coalition with Mr. Pitt's administration, it was necessary to hold out such *lures* as would make the coalition palatable'. 'If the general management and superintendence of Ireland *had not been offered* to his grace, that coalition *could never have taken place*—accordingly it was offered from the beginning . . . as was also the home department'. . . . 'Ask the duke of Portland,' his lordship continues, '. . . if he doubted that the office offered to him was to be entire. . . . Ask him if he was forewarned by Mr. Pitt that it was to be divested of half its duties, half its importance, and all its character'. . . ."

reaped. There was never the slightest danger of the Coalition's breaking-up, and yet Fitzwilliam was far too proud to take the Cabinet seat that was available as an alms to Portland's discredited friend.[1]

Saved though the Coalition was, its position long continued to be one of great anxiety. The Irish situation, for example, steadily deteriorated after Fitzwilliam's departure, and, as for Great Britain there was a succession of dangerous food troubles, provoked by a combination of scarcity and high prices.[2] It was the calamitous food situation of the poor that gave British political agitation its special chance in 1795, and the London Corresponding Society was very ready to take advantage of it. The Society had gained greatly from the tremendous rebuffs inflicted on Government at the Treason Trials of 1794, and large numbers of new members had been recruited during the explosions of popular joy that followed the "Not Guilty" verdicts. Scarcely, then, had Ministers sent Parliament into Recess on June 27th than they were faced, on June 29th, by a Corresponding Society meeting, called in the open air in order to allow of a large attendance by the general public.[3] The business put before the huge meeting that resulted was an *Address to the Nation* and another *to the King*. The nation was assured that the Society would continue to agitate for Universal Suffrage and Annual Parliaments as the "*natural* and *undoubted Rights*" of the British people. The King, for his part, was given some trenchant advice in a tone that some interpreted as menacing.

[1] Cf. D. G. Barnes, *George III and William Pitt*, pp. 346–7, for George III's readiness to humour Portland. According to the King, the "whole conduct of the Duke of Portland in this unpleasant business is so handsome that it is impossible not with satisfaction to gratify his feelings on this occasion. I therefore authorise Mr. Pitt to acquaint him with the suggestion having been laid before me and with my cordial consent, though I doubt much whether Earl Fitzwilliam is in a state of mind to accept it."

[2] Cf. *New Annual Register*, 1795, under April 18th, for militiamen taking a part in food disorders. The Oxfordshire Militia, stationed near Seaford, were reported to have "entered the town of Seaford, and seized all the flour and provisions they could meet with: That the next morning they marched in the same manner, in number about 500, to Newhaven, and to the tide mill near that town, where they found a very large quantity of flour: That they seized the horses of the farmers and of the artillery, with which they were carrying it away: That they also seized a vessel in the river, laden with flour and corn, on which they placed a guard of twenty men. . . ." It seems that the militia shared the view of the population around them and condemned the dispatch of food to districts offering higher prices.

[3] The meeting is described as having been held "in an enclosed field near the obelisk, in St. George's Fields, Borough Road". The Chairman and leading

"It is necessary, Sire," declared the Society,[1] "that you should be undeceived; and if you have not an honest Minister, that will dare to speak the truth, *the people should instruct their Sovereign, and save him from destruction.* We conjure you, Sire, . . . to yield a timely attention to the cries of a suffering people, and to exert that power with which the Constitution has intrusted you; to give them that free and equal representation which can alone enable the British Nation to prevent future and remove the present calamities; to dismiss from your councils those guilty Ministers who have so long with impunity insulted us, and betrayed our dearest interests; to put an immediate period to the ravages of a cruel and destructive war, and to restore to us that peace and tranquillity which are so essentially necessary for your OWN PERSONAL SECURITY AND FOR THE HAPPINESS OF THE PEOPLE."

The threatening temper which could be aroused among London crowds was vividly illustrated about a fortnight later by a new series of mob-riots, provoked by suspicion of the "crimping houses" and their alleged methods of finding Army recruits. The height of the crimping-house riots of mid-July was thus reported:[2]

On Monday night, a mob again collected at Charing-Cross, when after making every one pull off their hats as they passed, they proceeded to Mr. Pitt's, in Downing-street, and broke several windows of his house; but the guards being immediately called out, and appearing in sight, very soon dispersed them. The mob afterward went over Westminster-bridge, and paraded to St. George's Fields, where they attacked the Royal George public-house. . . . They gutted another recruiting house in Lambeth-road. . . . And last night, in the neighbourhood of Charing-cross, a numerous crowd, chiefly composed of boys under twenty years of age was collected, which however, on information of some military movements going forward at the Horse-guards, hastily withdrew in great part . . . to St. George's-fields, where they proceeded to demolish the remaining furniture of the Royal George. . . . This was about nine o'clock; the horse-guards were soon with them, and drove them from their work of depredation, but not from the spot; they continued shouting and insulting the soldiers . . . for some time. . . . After this the tumult considerably subsided: the soldiers, however, remained under arms till after day-light, when all seemed to be quiet; but, in a few hours, another multitude was drawn together, and it was thought necessary again to assemble the military . . . and detachments were also dispatched to other parts of the town threatened with riots. . . .

orator at the meeting was the young apothecary, John Gale Jones, who was destined to achieve considerable notoriety for many years to come.

[1] Cf. H. Jephson, *The Platform*, i, 244–5.

[2] *New Annual Register*, 1795, Principal Occurrences under July 15th.

The months that followed were full of disheartening intelligence. On the Continent, Spain, Hessen-Cassel and, finally, George III's own Hanoverian Government found it necessary to treat for peace with France, and, on October 1st, the French annexed the Austrian Netherlands in a way that, it was arguable, might have been avoided if official Britain had shown a different temper. Meanwhile, there was disquieting news of high treason, secret societies and military mutiny from Ireland,[1] and Great Britain itself, after a year of continuous food-shortage, seemed likely, in view of the dubious harvest-reports of 1795, to be entering upon a year that would be hungrier even than its predecessor. Ministers saw reason to announce an early summons of Parliament and to draw up a Speech from the Throne which, while stressing the internal woes of France and the continuing co-operation of Britain, Austria and Russia, invited Parliament to consider the food-scarcity and declared, for the first time, that if a reasonably stable Government of France offered to treat for a just peace, the overture would be earnestly taken up. If this indirect offer, spoiled though it was by the affectation of a superiority of status over the French Government,[2] had been expected by the populace, the grave disorders, which marked the opening of Parliament on October 29, 1795, might have been largely avoided. But in the plebeian circles, whose political representative was the London Corresponding Society, it was apparently considered impossible that the Pitt Government could be induced to undertake peace negotiations except by the strongest popular pressure.[3] As is well known, the mere indication that Ministers were prepared to treat for peace on their own terms drove Burke to undertake the

[1] Cf. *Annual Register*, 1795, Chronicle under September 3rd: "We learn by letters from Dublin that some serious riots have taken place there among the soldiers of the 104th, or Royal Manchester Volunteers, and 111th, or Birmingham Fencibles. . . . Mr. O'Connor and Mr. Griffin, two of the friends of the French convention . . . are sentenced to be hanged, drawn and quartered. . . . Thirteen apprentices and journeymen, of different trades, making in the whole thirty, have been apprehended in Dublin, charged with having sworn to the Defenders' Oath. . . ."

[2] Cf. *Ibid.*, State Papers, p. 138: "The destruction of their commerce, the diminution of their maritime power, and the unparalleled embarrassment and distress of their internal situation, have produced the impression which was naturally to be expected; and a general sense appears to prevail throughout France, that the only relief from the increasing pressure of these difficulties must arise from the restoration of peace, and the establishment of some settled system of government. . . ."

[3] Cf. Add. MSS. (Place), 27808, f. 36: "The whole country was in a ferment from the idea which was universally prevalent, that the Ministry would listen to no terms of peace with France. . . ."

thunderous splendour of the indignant *Letters on a Regicide Peace.*[1] The Corresponding Society leaders, then, driven on by the notion that the Ministers' attitude towards peace was even more inflexible than it was, resolved that, before Parliament was opened on October 29th, there should be a great popular demonstration on October 26th. How successful that demonstration was stands out even from the following account, given by the hostile *Annual Register.*[2]

"A general meeting of the London Corresponding Society," it recounted, "was held in the fields, near Copenhagen House, where the number assembled as members, auditors, and spectators was very great. Three *rostra* were erected for the convenience of those who wished to speak. On the recommendation of a committee, communicated by Mr. Jones, Mr. John Binns was called to the chair, who opened the business of the meeting, which he stated to be—An address to the nation on its present very critical and calamitous state; a remonstrance to his majesty on the neglect and contempt shewn to the late address [of June] delivered into the hands of his ministers; and certain resolutions which were thought applicable to the present alarming crisis, and absolutely necessary to be inquired into. After Mr. Hodson had recommended hearing the sentiments of every person present who chose to deliver them, whether a member of the society or not, and no such person appearing, the address, remonstrance and resolutions, were severally read, and adopted by acclamation; and they are to be printed and distributed at the expence of the society. The meeting was closed by speeches from Thelwall, Hodson and [Gale] Jones; and, from proper precautions that had been previously taken, the multitude dispersed in the utmost quietness."

This account, of course, was hardly meant to do justice to the unprecedented political phenomenon which had apparently been presented to the nation and the world—the evolution of plebeian politics from the gathering of inarticulate and hooligan Wilkes or No Popery mobs to the disciplined assembly of tens of thousands who, having created their own party organisation, now put forward their claim to a preponderant voice in framing national policy.[3] The *Annual Register*, too, thought it wise not to be precise about

[1] The first of the four *Letters* was written late in 1795, though it was withheld from the public until long after the appearance of the next two in 1796 and a fourth in 1797.

[2] Cf. *Annual Register*, 1795, Chronicle under October 26th.

[3] That the Corresponding Society did not confine its attention to the metropolis was made clear when, towards the end of the year, it published *Correspondence of the London Corresponding Society*. This contained communications from Bradford, Sheffield, Portsmouth, etc., etc.

the language used in the *Address to the Nation*, *The Remonstrance to the King* and the several *Resolutions* which it had reported. Certainly, that language contained much that the average Tory lawyer would have deemed "seditious", and one of the Resolutions announced the Corresponding Society's intention to spread this "sedition" throughout the principal towns in the country by means of lecturing deputies. It is not surprising that official opinion blamed the demonstration and language of October 26th for the dangerous street troubles that broke out on October 29th when the King went to open Parliament. How formidable these street troubles were may be seen from the following description in the *Annual Register*:[1]

> On the occasion of his majesty's going to the house of lords, the Mall and the parade of St. James's Park and Parliament-street, were completely choaked up with spectators . . . to see the king go to the house, there never were before more than a tenth part of the numbers of this day; for they at least amounted to 200,000. Several noblemen and cabinet ministers passed through the park from Buckingham house about two o'clock. The earl of Chatham, duke of Gloucester, &c. were hissed, and the duke of Portland was very much hooted. About twenty minutes afterwards the king left Buckingham-house, and was violently hissed and hooted, and groaned at the whole way; but no violence was offered till he arrived opposite the Ordnance Office, when a small pebble, or marble or bullet broke one of the windows . . . as it [the king's carriage] passed opposite Spring Gardens Terrace, another stone was thrown. . . . The crowd now pressed closely round the coach. . . . A considerable tumult took place when his majesty was about to alight. . . . A few minutes after his majesty had entered the palace, the mob attacked the state coach. . . . In its way along Pall Mall to the Mews, many things were also thrown at it. After a short time the king went in his private coach from St. James's to Buckingham-house, but, on his way through the park, the mob surrounded the carriage, and prevented it from proceeding, crying out, "Bread! Bread! Peace! Peace!" The guards were, however, speedily brought up, and they protected the carriage till his majesty got safe into Buckingham-house. . . .

In official circles these scenes, of course, evoked the greatest anger against the Corresponding Society whose proceedings three days before were blamed for the seditious temper of the street crowds of October 29th. The Peers undertook an inquiry the very same day; on October 31st the two Houses presented a joint Address to the King; and on November 4th a Royal Proclamation

[1] *Annual Register*, 1795, Chronicle under October 29th.

was issued against seditious meetings. The Proclamation was a mere preliminary to the two very severe Bills on Treasonable Practices and Seditous Meetings which the Law Officers were drafting and which were introduced, the one, on November 6th and the other on November 10th. Under the Treasonable Practices Bill the frontiers of High Treason were, as it proved widely and permanently advanced[1] and, in addition and more temporarily,[2] it was made a grave offence "by writing, printing, preaching, or other speaking . . . to incite or stir up the people to hatred or contempt of the person of his Majesty, or the government and constitution of this realm as by law established". To the public, the Seditious Meetings Bill was an even graver matter for the calling and holding of public meetings was to be placed, for over three years, under the greatest restraints, and capital punishment was to be decreed against several types of resistance to those restraints.[3] It is little wonder that Opposition, hopelessly outnumbered though it was at Westminster,[4] received very strong outside support in its attack on the Bills. It is significant that the *Annual Register*, no enemy to Government, admitted that "no law enacted by the British legislature, was ever received with such evident and general marks of ill-will and disapprobation as these two celebrated laws".[5] Large portions of the "respectable public", in short, not only made their own demonstrations of protest by petition or meeting[6] but, for the first time, accorded almost a

[1] By 36 Geo. III, cap. 7, "compassing" the use of force for the purpose of compelling a change in the King's councils or constraining or intimidating either House of Parliament and expressing such "compassings" by publishing any printing or writing became High Treason. This part of the Act was originally to last until the end of the next session after the demise of the Crown; but before that event occurred, the 57 Geo. III, cap. 7 made it perpetual.

[2] Until 1799.

[3] Cf. *New Annual Register*, 1796, British and Foreign History, pp. 52–3, for ex-Lord Chancellor Thurlow, pointing out the severity of the Bill. "By the present bill," he said, "if an assembly met for the mere discussion of public topics, continued together peaceably to the number of twelve or more for one hour after proclamation made, commanding them to disperse, they were guilty of felony, without benefit of clergy; and the magistrate was ordered to put them to death, or at least he incurred no penalty, if, upon resistance, any of the persons so continuing together lost their lives. . . ."

[4] Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 47, for, perhaps, the Opposition's best divisions in the Commons. On November 27th it raised 70 votes against 269 for adjourning some business on the Seditious Meetings Bill and, a little later that day, 73 against 273 in opposing the Bill's going into committee.

[5] Cf. *Annual Register*, 1796, History of Europe, p. 45.

[6] Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 39: "Meetings and consultations, both private and public, were held every where. Clubs and associations were formed for the purpose of opposing them. . . . Never had there appeared, in the memory of the oldest man, so firm and decided a plurality of adversaries to the ministerial measures. . . ."

respectful attention to the more popular excitements, marshalled by the Corresponding Society.

This chapter could hardly be considered complete without some mention of the two remarkable meetings called, during the passing of the "Two Acts" by the Corresponding Society. Here is an account of the meeting of November 12th from the *Annual Register*, which had obviously been impressed:[1]

> The corresponding society's numerous members, together with an immense multitude of their adherents and well-wishers, assembled on the twelfth of November, in the fields near Copenhagen-house. Here they solemnly denied all intentions of raising commotions, and disproved, by the strongest arguments they could adduce, the charge brought against them by ministry, of being concerned in the outrages committed against the king. They framed three petitions, one to the king, and the two others to the lords and commons; stating them to be the unanimous petitions of nearly four hundred thousand British subjects . . . on the measures of ministry, which tended to invade the liberties vested in them by the constitution. They supplicated, therefore, the king to exert his royal authority, in the preservation of his people's rights, directly threatened by the two bills brought forward by his ministers; and they requested the two houses to interfere in behalf of the public, against the ministerial attempt to procure their passing. . . .

And of the Corresponding Society's December meeting the *New Annual Register* said this:[2]

> On Monday [December 7th] the London Corresponding Society, together with an immense concourse of spectators, assembled in Mary-le-bone fields. About one o'clock rostra were erected, and Mr. Browne was called to the chair. After an explanatory speech, an address to the people, and a petition to the king, were read and unanimously approved of, together with a number of resolutions. Mr. Jones and Mr. Thelwall were the speakers. The petition to the king and the resolutions are in strong and firm, but loyal and respectful language. The conduct of the multitude was temperate and orderly. They signed the papers in great numbers, and separated in good order, and without the least tumult.

This was the summit of the Corresponding Society's history. Hereafter it began losing in numbers and importance.[3] Some

[1] Cf. *Annual Register*, 1796, p. 40. *The History of Two Acts*, the voluminous account published in 1796, in 828 pages, of the whole controversy gave 131,284 as petitioning against the Acts and 29,922 for them.

[2] *New Annual Register*, Principal Occurrences, p. 65.

[3] Based on such surviving material as Add. MSS. 27815, ff. 165–6 and Add. MSS. 27808, ff. 88–90.

members fell out because of the new dangers and restraints brought by the "Two Acts", and others because it was certain that Government spies and informers were at work within. Then, the best class of artisan is apt to tire, in any case, of the endless word-chopping involved in the constant round of resolution-phrasing, division-meeting and speech-making entailed by political agitation. Even the breeches-maker, Francis Place, who loved political activity enough to make himself a place in national history, began to grow weary and pessimistic. A member of the Corresponding Society since June 1794 and entrusted, during 1795, with two of its most important offices, he decided, at mid-summer 1796, to lay them down. In March 1797 he abandoned his last responsibilities and in June of that year he left the Society altogether. The growing hopelessness of the agitation; the danger, at once, from Government spies and foolish praters; and, finally, the urgent need to concentrate on bread-winning for his increasing family, combined to master his uncommonly strong urge towards politics. When this happened, in the end, to such a man as Francis Place, it need cause no wonder to learn that it had happened months, and even years, before to hundreds of Corresponding Society members, who were more typical artisans than Place.[1]

[1] Cf. Add. MSS. 27808 and 35143 for Place's own story. It is summarised in Graham Wallas, *Life of Francis Place*, pp. 22–8. An odd part of the story told by Place (Add. MSS., 35143, ff. 159–64) and not reported by Wallas is, perhaps, worth giving here—the way that one financial vulture, known as "Jew King"—confidence trickster and moneylender—began courting the Corresponding Society leaders in the hope, doubtless, of immense gains from revolutionary confiscations if a revolution occurred and he was favourably known to its leaders. Of the "notorious and infamous Jew King" Place wrote thus: "he had for some time been making friends among the reformers and particularly of the leading members of the London Corresponding Society. Of Ashley and Hardy he bought boots and shoes, of Richard Hodgson hats. I sometimes made an article for some of his livery servants. Other Members of the Society were employed by him in the same way, and with each of us he used to converse at our own shop or lodgings. . . . I disliked him much and always suspected that he contemplated some iniquity. Some thought he meant honestly, some thought he was a spy. Ashley, Colonel Despard and myself thought his object was to take advantage of any circumstance and especially of any commotion caused by an invasion or attempt at invasion to enrich himself.

"The alarm of invasion had become general and was kept up by the Government. King was assiduous in persuading people to arm themselves, to be able, as he said, to repel invasion and assist the civil power in London should the army and volunteers be called to the coast. To some who wished for invasion or any thing else by which confusion might be brought about, King held a different kind of language, he persuaded several to purchase pikes; and to keep them openly, that is hung across their apartment so as to be seen by all. . . . I saw several, they were eight or nine feet long . . . King meant to turn these people to account in some way if he could. He thought there would be an invasion that the Government would be broken up and that he should

be able to have considerable influence and power which he intended to use for his own purposes. He endeavoured all he could to make people pleased with him . . . among others he invited them to his house in small numbers classing them according to his own notion as each might appear likely to be useful to him. I with much reluctance attended one of his dinners at a house near Manchester Square. John Ashley, Richard Hodgson, Alexander Galloway and two or three others were at the party. He gave us a sumptuous dinner of three courses and a dessert, all served on plate, the table was attended by men in livery and one in plain clothes. This disgusted me utterly and when after dinner King dilated on the probability of an invasion and a revolution and the great advantages these would produce to the country, I told him I did not believe there was any probability of either invasion or revolution but that if either was likely to occur, I should be exceedingly suspicious of him. This led to a fierce dispute with Hodgson whose opinion differed from mine and who was willing to give King credit for honest opinion and good intentions. . . ." One sometimes wonders whether Place himself did not on occasion protest too much and whether Graham Wallas was justified in never hinting the need for an even slight qualification.

CHAPTER VI

PEACE OVERTURES, 1795–7

"We are in a war of a *peculiar* nature. It is not with an ordinary community, which is hostile or friendly as passion or as interest may veer about; not with a state which makes war through wantonness, and abandons it through lassitude. We are at war with a system, which, by its essence, is inimical to all other governments. . . . It is with an *armed doctrine* that we are at war. It has, by its essence, a faction of opinion, and of interest, and of enthusiasm, in every country. To us it is a Colossus which bestrides our channel. It has one foot on a foreign shore, the other upon the British soil. . . . Nothing can so completely ruin any of the old governments, ours in particular, as the acknowledgement, directly, or by implication, of any kind of superiority in this new power. This acknowledgement we make, if, in a bad or doubtful situation of our affairs, we solicit peace. . . ."

From Burke's *Letters on a Regicide Peace* (*Letter*, October 1796).

"In the course of the spring [1797] several popular meetings were held agreeably to the restrictions of the new act, the avowed object of which was to petition his majesty for the dismissal of ministers. In most of these meetings the petitions were carried unanimously, particularly in the cities of London and Westminster, the borough of Southwark and the county of Middlesex. The petitions contained heavy charges against the ministry, but that of the city of Westminster was fuller than most. . . . It commenced with charging the ministers with having wantonly involved the nation in a ruinous war, in consequence of which they have squandered upwards of ONE HUNDRED AND THIRTY MILLIONS OF MONEY; and laid on taxes to the amount of SIX MILLIONS AND A HALF annually. The lives which they had sacrificed, and the sum they had added to human misery, it was added, were incalculable."

New Annual Register, 1797, p. 206.

"May 26th [1797]—House of Commons. Mr. Grey's motion for Reform of Parliament. . . .

"Grey's speech was moderate and discreet. 1. He disclaimed theoretical principles either in favour of the rights of man and universal suffrage on the one side; or as founded upon the inequality of local representation on the other. . . . 2. His plan

was to make the 92 county members 113, by giving 2 to each Riding of Yorkshire, and division of Lincolnshire &c; and to substitute in lieu of all other rights of election of the 400 other members one general scot and lot right for householders divided into districts. 3. He argued that the *present time* was the very best, the redress being the most necessary when the people were most discontented.

"Mr. Fox argued for the plan of scot and lot. . . . He relied upon this as the ancient common law right of borough election, and so decided by Serjeant Glanville's Committee in James I's reign. . . .

"Mr. Pitt resisted the time and plan. The *time*, because when all other circumstances agitated the public no change was likely to stop at the point which its own projector proposed; and as to the *plan*, that scot and lot was practically found to be the worst mode of elective franchise, the most corrupt and violent. . . . Division at two o'clock in the morning. [Ayes 63; Noes 258]."

From *Diary and Correspondence of Charles Abbot, Lord Colchester*, i, 104–5.

THE Speech from the Throne of October 29, 1795 had, as has been seen, hinted at a readiness to negotiate with a French Government prepared for an "order of things, compatible with the tranquillity of other countries, and affording a reasonable prospect of security and permanence in any treaty which might be concluded".[1] Whether or not Pitt really hoped that his hint would be taken up in France, certain it is that the tone of moral and political superiority adopted in the King's Speech was such that negotiations, on that basis, would have proved fatal to the new Directory, just being installed, amid Jacobin commotions, as the French Executive.[2] On December 8, 1795 Pitt, with the odium of the heavy coercion of the "Two Acts" still fresh upon him and with an unpalatable Budget of war-taxes and war-borrowing to carry against a vigilant Opposition, decided on an even plainer intimation of his readiness to treat. A message from the King was delivered that day in the House of Commons, announcing George's disposition to enter into negotiations with the new Government of France.[3]

It was not to be expected that Fox, Sheridan and Grey would refrain from acid criticism of Pitt's long delay in offering to treat with the French Republic. And even in a Parliamentary Session that lasted until May 19, 1796 and that saw all Opposition's ingenuity employed in demonstrating why there was need to suspect every step of Government, from Barrack construction to Loan Flotation, there was something outstandingly vehement in the scorn Fox poured on Pitt's plea that the Directory was the first Republican authority with whom negotiation had been possible.[4] Both sides in the British Parliament, then, apparently

[1] Cf. *New Annual Register*, 1795, Public Papers, p. 94.

[2] *Ibid.* "The destruction of their commerce, the diminution of their maritime power, and the unparalleled embarrassment and distress of their internal situation, have produced the impression which was naturally to be expected; and a general sense appears to prevail throughout France, that the only relief from the increasing pressure of these difficulties must arise from the restoration of peace, and the establishment of some settled system of government. The distraction and anarchy which have so long prevailed in that country, have led to a crisis [Paris fighting, October 4th and 5th], of which it is as yet impossible to foresee the issue. . . ."

[3] *Ibid.*, 1796, British and Foreign History, pp. 105–6.

[4] Cf. *Annual Register*, 1796, History of Europe, pp. 56–7: "Mr. Fox severely reprehended ministry for pretending that, till now, the government of France was incapable of maintaining the relations of peace and amity with other nations. They had maintained them successively with every power they had treated with; nor was the character of the present rulers of that country more favourable to the

expected the new French Executive to avail itself of the opportunity to treat with France's still powerful enemies. No speaker in the debate of December 9, 1795, seems to have anticipated that the Directors, still sitting on a Jacobin volcano,[1] would come to the conclusion that France's interests and their own personal safety demanded, not negotiations in which they would be summoned, in the name of Britain, Austria and Russia, to evacuate Belgium, the Left Bank of the Rhine and Savoy, but a more vigorous and successful prosecution of the war than had obtained of late. The Directors were, in fact, planning ambitious campaigns in Italy and Germany and had but the scantiest interest in diplomatic exploration of the terms on which Britain, Austria and Russia would consent to recognise them as the legal government of France.

There was, of course, great popular war-weariness in France where it may well have been more intense than in Britain. But whereas political conditions in Britain allowed the Opposition and a large part of the "public" to call for instant peace with impunity, the vocal elements in France, most feared by the Directors, were Jacobins, hopefully waiting to exploit for their own purposes any Directorial retreats before the demands of the "coalised tyrants". The diplomatic immobility, enforced upon the Directors by these conditions, yielded them some apparent advantages. In February, for example, when the British Opposition was once more calling for peace, and enforcing its cry by painting a black picture of British finances,[2] Pitt finally ordered a diplomatic inquiry that

preserving of such relations. Ministers ought, in the mean time, to be reminded with what powers they had not scrupled to enter into treaties of amity, and of what deeds they had, in consequence, been the abettors.... He ridiculed the idea, that the French were more deserving of confidence on account of their new constitution; their principles were still the same.... But neither those principles, nor their antecedent government, ought to have been made the pretext for waging a war of extermination...."

[1] Cf. *Buonarroti's History of Babeuf's Conspiracy for Equality* (English trans. of 1836 by Bronterre O'Brien).

[2] Cf. *Annual Register*, 1796, History of Europe, pp. 57–8: "On the fifteenth of February, Mr. Grey introduced his motion for peace by a speech, wherein he observed, that, contrary to general expectation, the ministry, in lieu of a negociation for peace, were making preparations for a continuation of the war...." And, according to the same source (p. 61): "In the mean time, a report was daily gaining ground, that the plans of ministry embraced such a multiplicity of objects, that new demands would shortly be made of means to carry them into execution. Their opponents thought it expedient, for that reason, to call the attention of the public to the situation of the national finances.... On the tenth of March, this subject was brought into the house of commons by Mr. Grey...."

could not, like the peace hints of October and December 1795, be officially ignored at Paris. The inquiry, commonly regarded, among neutrals, as further strengthening France's diplomatic position, was made on March 8th in the shape of a communication addressed by the British Minister in Berne to M. Barthélemy, the French representative who had, in 1795, negotiated France's triumphant treaties with Prussia and Spain. M. Barthélemy was asked to make inquiries at Paris and procure a written answer to the following questions:[1]

> Is there the disposition in France to open a negotiation with his majesty and his allies for the re-establishment of a general peace, upon just and suitable terms, by sending for that purpose ministers to a congress? . . .
>
> Would there be the disposition to communicate to the undersigned the general grounds of a pacification, such as France would be willing to propose; in order that his majesty and his allies might thereupon examine in concert, whether they are such as might serve as the foundation of a negotiation for peace?
>
> Or would there be a desire to propose any other way whatever, for arriving at the same end, that of a general pacification?

The answer, delivered at Berne, on March 26th was an impertinence. English good faith was questioned; negotiation in Congress was decried as "endless"; and all discussion of French annexations was ruled out in advance. But such, it was said, was the Directors ardent desire for peace, that they would be prepared to receive overtures "with respect to the countries occupied by the French armies, and which have not been united to France". It is hardly surprising that a British official declaration of April 10th announced that the French pretensions to put all their annexations outside the sphere of negotiation were "inadmissible" and a proof that the Directors were "remote from any disposition for peace".[2]

The diplomatic exchanges just recounted did, despite all else, yield Government one considerable satisfaction. They apparently enabled all pro-Government elements in Britain to stay united as well as all the Powers still in Coalition. It was, doubtless, for those very reasons that Opposition, in the closing stages of the Session, found cause to question both the manner and the sincerity of Government's overtures to France. It was on May 10th, nine days before the end of the Session, that a final assault was delivered

[1] *New Annual Register*, 1796, Public Papers, p. 121. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 122.

against Ministers in both Houses on motions that incriminated almost their every step in war and diplomacy since 1793. Though early disasters, inflicted by General Buonaparte on the King of Sardinia, presaged yet another departure from the Coalition, Opposition's embittered review of Government's alleged errors and follies failed to carry conviction to the bulk of England's governing classes. The Lords rejected by 110 against 10, and the Commons by 216 against 42, motions suggesting, among other things, that the late diplomatic break-down had been due primarily to the obstinacy and misconduct of Ministers.[1] Nor did the balance of political power alter sensibly at the General Election of June though something was already known of serious Austrian defeats in Lombardy.[2]

But the British political atmosphere altered considerably as the summer saw Buonaparte's continued successes in Italy and victories by Jourdan and Moreau in Germany that seemed, for a time, of almost equal importance since they induced states like Wurtemberg and Baden to abandon hostilities. On August 3rd, for example, that well-connected and very conservative diarist, Joseph Farington, reported an equally conservative friend to the following effect:[3] "Lysons hears that if Pitt does not make peace before November He must go out—War ill managed—Bank Directors much out of humour with Pitt—West India expences enormous. St. Domingo cost 2 millions more than expected." There is an even more significant entry in the *Farington Diary* under October 2nd, an entry that argues serious financial strain and growing ill-will to Pitt at Threadneedle Street, where the considerable anti-French turn just taken by the German fighting was known to be due to great and unauthorised financial help sent to Austria.[4] The dispatch of this financial help had apparently crippled the Bank and the City, who were, in any case, inclined to doubt whether any French retreats in Germany were of equal importance to France's menacing preparations for invading England or Ireland. But here is Farington's own entry:[5]

[1] *New Annual Register*, 1796, British and Foreign History, pp. 141–53.

[2] Buonaparte had entered Milan on May 15th, when the Austrians were already falling back on Mantua.

[3] *Farington Diary*, i, 158.

[4] Cf. *New Annual Register*, 1797, pp. 35–46, for Parliamentary attacks made in December 1796 on the way in which £1,200,000 had been sent to the Emperor without a special Parliamentary authorisation.

[5] Cf. *Farington Diary*, i, 165–6.

Mr. Berwick called on me this morning.—There are great difficulties in the City from a want of money.—He blames in some degree, some of the Directors of the Bank, who are supposed to be unfriendly to government, and who may have an interest in promoting occasional difficulties. He also said that the *Capital* of the Bank is not proportioned to the business done, which is a cause of hesitation in discounting there from an apprehension that if the times became precarious from alarms of invasion &c. a run might be made which the Bank could not answer, not having specie equal to its discounts. . . . It has been talked that a board of controwel would be proposed to act as a check upon the partiality and general conduct of the Bank Directors. . . . On the whole Mr. Berwick thinks there is great cause of apprehension from the increasing want of confidence in money credit, which the French will endeavour to heighten by perpetual threats of invasion. He does not think a Loan could be had by the Minister, at least for not more than £50 per cent.

Pitt, however, had already taken his measures to show the country that, whatever the hardships and anxieties it was suffering, the fault was not Government's. And the French Directory, shaken by serious reverses in Germany and Mantua's stubborn defence in Italy, no longer made insuperable difficulties on the very threshold of negotiation. The King's Speech from the Throne, read to the new Parliament assembled on October 6th, contained, in fact, the information that a British representative was about to proceed to Paris for direct negotiations with the French Government on behalf of Britain and its allies.[1] The French Directors, it was plain, though they knew that their bargaining position was about to be improved by a Spanish declaration of war on England, were no longer under the illusion that the British Opposition or populace could force Ministers to abandon their continental allies and accept a peace that left the Continent at France's mercy. When, indeed, the course of Malmesbury's negotiations between October and December 1796 is carefully examined, it appears that the Directors had furnished themselves with quite plausible arguments and even a scheme of compensations for Britain's principal friends on the Continent. France's annexations were justified, for example, on the plea that they merely restored a European Balance of Power, deranged to France's disadvantage

[1] *Annual Register*, 1796, State Papers, p. 118: "I have omitted no endeavours for setting on foot negotiations to restore peace to Europe. . . . The steps which I have taken for this purpose have at length opened the way to an immediate and direct negotiation. . . . I shall immediately send a person to Paris, with full powers. . . ." The British Government's draft suggestions for peace, as prepared on September 2, 1796, are in Fortescue MSS., iii, 239–42.

by the immense Polish annexations of Russia, Prussia and Austria and the great increase of British power, ascribable to growing control in India. Austria, too, was offered compensation for the Netherlands in a plan for secularising the three ecclesiastical electorates, and it was indicated that the Prince of Orange might also be found compensations in Germany if there was a reorganisation of the Empire. To the Paris "realists" of 1796, conscious that an expeditionary force for Ireland was waiting at Brest, the British negotiating standpoint finally proved infuriating enough to lead them, on December 19th, to break off conversations and order the British representative home. Lord Malmesbury, it transpired, had invited the French to evacuate all their conquests save Avignon, Nice and Savoy and had offered, in return, that captured French colonies would be returned though not those of the Batavian Republic.[1]

Against the possibly dangerous attack now to be expected from Opposition, the ground on which Ministers might make their stand had already been outlined by Burke in his bitter *Two Letters addressed to a Member of the Present Parliament on the Proposals of Peace with the Regicide Directory of France.*[2] Burke had recognised, more in sorrow than in anger, that Pitt had probably been under strong pressure when he had undertaken to negotiate and that, moreover, it was in Ministers' minds that a break-down, ascribable to French rapacity, would help rather than hinder their war-efforts in 1797. Burke, of course, had seen not the slightest prospect of any peace that was worth negotiating and had called loudly to Pitt to remember that, whatever the clamour raised by Opposition,[3] four-fifths of the effective political strength of the

[1] Cf. *Annual Register*, 1796, State Papers, pp. 147–77, for the official account entitled *Official Correspondence, published by the British Government, relating to the Negotiation for Peace between the French Republic and Great Britain. Diaries and Correspondence of the first Earl of Malmesbury*, iii, 259–368, give the British negotiator's own accounts and his descriptions of what he found in France and Paris.

[2] Cf. *New Annual Register*, 1796, Domestic Literature, p. 250, for an Opposition attack: "In this work the author makes use of his well-known powers of rhetoric in attempting to produce the conviction, that the French republic must be destroyed, or it will destroy all Europe; and he descants, with his accustomed energy, against the dangerous nature of French principles, and the licentious, prostitute, abandoned, rude, coarse, savage, and ferocious character of the French people. Every person who is not actuated by the same frenzy with the author, must execrate the tendency of his inflammatory production. Several treatises soon made their appearance in answer to Mr. Burke. . . ."

[3] Cf. *Analytical Review*, December 1796, for part of that clamour in the shape of as favourable an examination as possible of the considerable volume of anti-Burke pamphleteering already available.

country would follow him in a refusal to see the ancient landmarks of Europe obliterated by the Jacobins. But Burke's last analysis of the British political position is worth repeating before the crises of 1797, the year of his death, are examined.

"In England and Scotland," Burke had declared, "I compute that those of adult age, not declining in life, of tolerable leisure for such discussions, and of some means of information, more or less, and who are above menial dependence, (or what virtually is such), may amount to about four hundred thousand. There is such a thing as a natural representative of the people. This body is that representative; and on this body, more than on the legal constituent, the artificial representative depends. This is the British public; and it is a public very numerous. . . .

"Of these four hundred thousand political citizens, I look upon one-fifth, or about eighty thousand, to be pure Jacobins; utterly incapable of amendment; objects of eternal vigilance; and, when they break out, of legal constraint. On these, no reason, no argument, no example, no venerable authority, can have the slightest influence. They desire a change; and they will have it if they can. If they cannot have it by English cabal, they will make no scruple of having it by the cabal of France. . . .

"This minority is great and formidable. I do not know whether, if I aimed at the total overthrow of a kingdom, I should wish to be encumbered with a larger body of partisans. They are more easily disciplined and directed than if the number were greater. These, by their spirit of intrigue, and by their restless agitating activity, are of a force far superior to their numbers; and, if times grew the least critical, have the means of debauching or intimidating many of those who are now sound. . . . This minority is numerous enough to make a mighty cry for peace, or for war, or for any object they are led vehemently to desire. . . .

"The majority, the other four-fifths, is perfectly sound; and of the best possible disposition to religion, to government, to the true and undivided interests of their country. Such men are naturally disposed to peace. . . . Good men do not suspect that their destruction is attempted through their virtues. This their enemies are perfectly aware of: and accordingly, they, the most turbulent of mankind, who never make a scruple to shake the tranquillity of their country to its centre, raise a continual cry for peace with France. . . . From the beginning, and even whilst the French gave the blows, and we hardly opposed the *vis inertiae* to their efforts, from that day to this hour, like importunate Guinea-fowls crying one note day and night, they have called for peace."

Before news arrived of the breakdown of the peace effort at Paris, so loudly condemned by Burke, Ministers had already had one dangerous ordeal. It was not the way they proposed to raise

15,000 extra men for the Services or provide a Home Defence force of 60,000 Militia and 20,000 mounted men that made their principal trouble. It was not even the list of unpleasant new war-taxes recited by Pitt in his Budget statement of December 7th.[1] It was the admission, made at the conclusion of Pitt's speech, that, "during the interval of Parliament", £1,200,000 had been sent to the Emperor "without a public discussion" that might, it was said, have had its difficulties both for Austria and for England. Fox immediately rose in angry criticism, and next day Opposition appealed to Parliament not to allow its control of the purse to be set aside in the manner employed by Pitt. In the division that resulted that day Opposition raised a vote of 58 against 164, and this was improved on December 14th to one of 81 against 285. A vote of 81 against Government in such critical times betokened a good deal of dissatisfaction, and, in point of fact, criticism of Government's finance was bitter and active in the hard-pressed City which held its own troubles to be due to Ministers having forced the unwilling Bank of England to find the £1,200,000 exported to Austria.[2]

It was on December 30th that Pitt faced another ordeal—the debate on the Royal Message that had informed Parliament of the breakdown of Malmesbury's negotiation at Paris. Fortunately for himself Pitt made one of the great speeches of his life while Fox's handling of Opposition's case was most provocative. Fox saw the French point of view so clearly that his speech could scarcely have been improved upon if the Directors had been permitted to send their own advocate to Westminster.[3] It could hardly have won

[1] Cf. *New Annual Register*, 1797, British and Foreign History, p. 32, for the new taxation, calculated to bring in £2,132,000 per annum practically all of it mortgaged for the interest-service on War-Debt. The list of new taxes began with 10 per cent on teas and coffees.

[2] Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 41: "Mr. alderman Combe seconded the [Fox's] motion, he said, in obedience to the instructions of his constituents, who had met that day in the common hall of the city of London, and had desired their representatives to censure the conduct of ministers, in granting away the public money without the consent of parliament. He also observed, that the discounting of bills drawn for the purpose of remitting money to the imperial troops, had swallowed up so much of the cash of the bank, as to compel that great body to narrow their discounts; and the British were made to suffer, that the German soldiers might be supplied."

[3] Cf. *Farington Diary*, under January 2, 1797: "The Speaker mentioned Pitts speech on Lord Malmsberrys letter &c as having been very powerful. . . . The Speaker remarked that Pitt by manner shewed a contempt for Fox. . . ." Fox might have done better if he had taken a less partisan tone, for the *Farington Diary* itself gives evidence of a good deal of doubt on the possibility of dispossessing the French of Belgium.

Fox votes, for instance, to take so French a line as to argue that if the Directors were permitted "only" the gain of Savoy, Nice and Avignon, France would lose in consequence when compared with Austria, Russia and Prussia, all aggrandised by Partitions of Poland which Fox found more criminal than anything attempted by the French. Dundas probably expressed the view of the bulk of the House when he described Fox's effort as:[1]

> ... the most mischievous which he ever heard come from an envenomed Opposition. There was scarcely one topic contained in it which was not calculated to give encouragement to our enemies. In the good times of our forefathers it never occurred, to the most inflamed patriot, to avail himself of his situation, as a member of parliament, to plead the cause of the enemy in the manner the French republic had been applauded that night.

Dundas seems to have taken the right line against Opposition for Fox's division was no more than 37 against Government's 212.

Pitt was, of course, still merely on the threshold of the more wearing anxieties destined to dog him throughout 1797. There were, naturally, compensations. Thus, the Directors' plan to land an army, capable of revolutionising disaffected Ireland, came to grief in the first days of 1797, and the small experimental force, landed, during February, in Wales, only served, by its ignominious surrender to "country people", to show the folly of the common Paris view that the British populace would rise against its "aristocratic oppressors" at the first sight of French uniforms. But if the Paris optimists overlooked the immense effect of the counter-revolutionary indoctrination that had long been proceeding in Britain with material as "popular" and diverse as Sayers' caricatures and Hannah More's tracts,[2] Government's difficulties in conducting the war seemed nevertheless to be increasing steadily. A decisive turn to continental hostilities had been given by Buonaparte when, on January 14, 1797, he broke, at Rivoli, the last Austrian attempt to relieve Mantua. The capitulation of Mantua had quickly followed on February 2nd, and this had been succeeded, in turn, by the submission to the French of all those

[1] *New Annual Register*, 1797, p. 89.

[2] Hannah More's were, perhaps, the favourites in the collected volumes of Cheap Repository Tracts issued in 1795 and 1798. A total tract sale of near two millions in Britain was claimed in the first year, though, of course, the monthly issues were much bought by the well-to-do to give away free.

portions of Italy hitherto attempting opposition[1] and, what was worse, the apparently irresistible advance of Buonaparte towards Austrian territory proper. To balance those misfortunes there was, it is true, the British naval victory over Spain at Cape St. Vincent but some days before the news arrived, British official finance suffered a blow that threatened the very foundations of the country's war-effort. This blow deserves some little treatment of its own.

It was early in February 1797 that the currency position, after having caused great anxiety at the Bank of England for years, finally began to break down.[2] Ever since 1793 the drain of specie to theatres of war had become increasingly serious, and when, during the winter of 1796–7, invasion uncertainties in Britain and insurrection possibilities in Ireland caused much prudential conversion of bank-notes into gold, the position at the Bank of England rapidly became critical. On February 26th, for fear of worse, a Privy Council order had to be issued forbidding the Bank to make any further payments in gold until the matter had been laid before Parliament. And on February 28th, when Pitt asked the Commons for a Committee to consider the indefinite suspension of gold-payments, Opposition came forward with the charge that the ruin they had long prophesied was at hand unless Ministers were dismissed and policy changed. Opposition divided, not unfavourably, at 86 against 244, and, when the struggle was renewed on March 1st, there was a division of 67 against 141 for a wider inquiry than Ministers proposed, and one of 53 against 144 for adding Fox to the Committee.[3] During the subsequent proceedings on Bank affairs, Opposition several times obtained figures that denoted, like those above, a marked weakening in Pitt's Parliamentary credit. There was, for instance, a division of March 24th when Opposition's vote rose to 88 against Government's 218.

The Parliamentary demonstrations against the alleged consequences of Pitt's war-finance were, however, less serious in total effect, than those undertaken in many different parts of England

[1] Cf. Bohn's *Blair's Chronological Tables* for Ancona seized as early as February 9th and peace dictated to the Pope on February 17th.

[2] Cf. *New Annual Register*, 1797, pp. 142–3, for the Opposition in the Lords finally extricating from the papers laid before Parliament the fact that the Bank Directors had warned Pitt about their specie position on fourteen occasions between December 11, 1794, and February 21, 1797.

[3] *Ibid.*, pp. 156–60.

and Ireland. According to the *Annual Register*, petitions for peace and the dismissal of Government were organised in "almost every county, city, and town in England", and as the petition, adopted on March 23rd by the Livery of London, often served as a guide to other places, it is worth quoting as evidence of the leading complaints of the "public".[1]

"We lament," announced the Freemen of London, "that by the evil instigations of your Majesty's advisers, these nations have been plunged into a war, unparalleled in misery and destruction, which has nearly ruined our commerce, impoverished our manufacturers, depopulated our country, sapped the public credit, and widely extended the most flagitious corruption.

"We most deeply deplore that your Majesty's ministers, abandoning the principles they once professed, have endeavoured to prevent the remonstrances of your people, attacking the very vitals of our constitution, and depriving your subjects of liberties which their ancestors with so much energy 'claimed, demanded, and insisted on as their undoubted right and inheritance' . . . and for the defence and preservation of which your Majesty's royal house was chosen and placed upon the throne of these realms.

"We therefore most humbly beseech your Majesty to dismiss for ever from your Majesty's presence and councils those advisers, both public and secret, of the measures we lament, not doubting that by a change of councils such measures may be adopted as will speedily procure the inestimable blessings of peace, and produce such a system of oeconomy as shall restore the public credit and the happiness of your people. But should your Majesty any longer confide in such advisers, we are firmly convinced that they will completely undermine that basis of national prosperity and happiness, the reciprocal confidence of a Sovereign and a free people. . . .

These petitions, strongly-worded though they were, would doubtless have been stronger if the full tale of war-perils had been known—the desperate situation in Ireland, held down by a species of military terror, the continuous deterioration of the continental position where Buonaparte had begun the invasion of Austrian territory proper, and, worst of all, the dangerous discontent in the Fleets. At the end of February the seamen of the Channel Fleet based at Portsmouth, had secretly prepared eleven petitions, asking for an increase of their miserably insufficient pay.[2] Those petitions

[1] *Annual Register*, 1797, Appendix to the Chronicle, pp. 83–4.

[2] Cf. Dobrée and Manwaring, *The Floating Republic* (Pelican ed.), p. 32: "It is now upwards of two years since your petitioners observed with pleasure the augmentation which had been made to pay of the Army and Militia, and

were sent to the seamen's favourite admiral, Lord Howe, and were by him transmitted to the Admiralty. Here the optimistic conclusion was reached that the petitions represented, not the view of eleven ships' companies, but those of a single malcontent who had altered his handwriting and a little of his phrasing to make the pretence of eleven different petitions easier to credit. As no apparent attention was, therefore, paid to their petitions, the seamen of the Portsmouth Fleet began on March 31st to prepare another set of petitions in two copies, one to go to the Secretary of the Admiralty and another to Fox, Leader of the Opposition. And this time, it was resolved to make certain of satisfaction by taking charge of the Fleet until the wished-for concessions had been obtained. It was on Easter Sunday, April 16th, that orders were first defied; on April 17th Delegates from the ships' companies had firm charge of the Fleet; and on April 18th they received the first offer of concessions from the Admiralty in respect of pay and disablement-pensions. This offer was rejected on April 19th, the Delegates demanding pay of a shilling a day for able seamen, disability pensions of £10 per annum, and important changes in the food arrangements on board ship. Even when the First Lord of the Admiralty, by hurrying from Portsmouth to London, and thence, accompanied by brother-Ministers, to Windsor, had procured the authority to make the concessions demanded, the trouble at Portsmouth was not over. The seamen's Delegates demanded the issue of a royal pardon, and only when this was obtained did the Fleet return to its duty (April 23rd).[1]

There was renewed trouble early in May, for which Opposition hesitated not to blame the Ministers. On May 8th, when the Estimate for the Augmentation of Seamen's Wages, was laid before Parliament, Fox affirmed that Ministers' delay in introducing it had been one of the causes for the renewed incidents at Portsmouth.[2] Next day Opposition, supplied with some official details, charged Pitt with a high degree of culpability for failing, in the

the provision that took place with respect to their wives and families . . . naturally expecting that they should in their turn experience the same munificence, but alas no notice has been taken of them, nor the smallest provision made for their wives and families. . . ."

[1] *New Annual Register*, 1797, Principal Occurrences, pp. 84–5.

[2] *Annual Register*, 1797, History, p. 212: "The silence of ministers had produced the fresh disturbances in the fleet at Portsmouth, by exciting a suspicion of their sincerity. What motive, he asked, could have induced them to suffer a whole fortnight to elapse . . . ." [History, as above, will be much used as the abbreviated form of History of Europe.]

critical circumstances of the time, to expedite the official routine by which Estimates are produced.[1] The speed, however, with which Pitt secured the passage of a Seamen's Wage Bill, based on the Estimate, and sent Lord Howe down with it and a new Pardon Proclamation, left even Opposition without a ground for new complaint. The final, and, as it proved, permanent pacification of the Portsmouth Fleet, on May 15th, was the country's salvation. On the one hand, the continental disasters which had led Austria to sign the Preliminaries of Leoben on April 18th seemed less ominous once the Channel Fleet was obediently at sea. And, on the other hand, the bad trouble which, on May 22nd, broke out in the Nore Fleet was discountenanced in advance by the attempt that had been there made to force terms upon Government a good deal more far-reaching than those which had fully satisfied the senior Fleet.

A critical stage in the Nore Mutiny was reached on June 1st. The seamen's leaders had, by that time, attempted to take so high a line with the Admiralty that negotiations had been broken off and official preparations for measures of force begun. Events soon proved that those seamen's leaders who were "Jacobin" enough to consider civil war or desertion to the enemy were far more extreme than the bulk of the Fleet. By June 13, indeed, after coercion that had yet gone little farther than the refusal of water and fresh provisions from the shore, the mutiny leader, Richard Parker, was under arrest and control of the ships back in the hands of the officers. The naval mutinies, in fact, were far from answering the eager hopes of the French. So far from bringing down the British Government, they enabled it to strengthen itself by adopting a new and more human attitude towards the seamen and soldiers.[2] New peace negotiations with the French, too, undertaken on the ground that Austria's enforced signature of Peace Preliminaries had radically altered the continental situation, were pursued on a much less disadvantageous basis than had seemed

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 213: "He [severely] blamed the conduct of ministers, in postponing the consideration of the seamen's demands . . . to such objects as the Imperial loan and the marriage-portion of the princess-royal, which were of such inferior importance to the nation, and ought, therefore, without hesitation, to have been laid aside till a business of such magnitude had been settled. . . ."

[2] Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 222, for improvements of pay granted to the troops. There is a significant admission that their "miserable pittance" of pay had been raised partly in consequence of a "disposition to claim a redress of this great evil" having become "quite apparent in the whole army, particularly in the corps stationed in the near vicinity of London, and in other populous cities and towns. . . ."

possible when the first overture was made on June 1st.[1] When Parliament was prorogued on July 20th, virtually the whole nation was full of hope that the direct negotiations, reopened by Lord Malmesbury at Lille on July 6th, would result in a peace settlement.

But if Ministers were in temporarily calmer waters than they had known for some time, they still had many anxieties. The situation in Ireland could scarcely have been more explosive, and much of working-class London not only continued radically disaffected but was about to be mustered in another dangerous anti-Government demonstration. Of the Petition and Remonstrance to the King, whose adoption was made the ostensible cause of the London Corresponding Society's meeting at the end of July, little need be said here. It contained the usual attacks on the War and the Ministers and, if its reading could have been completed, would doubtless have referred also to Parliament's rejection, by 258 votes against 63, of Grey's Parliamentary Reform motion of May 26th. But the London Corresponding Society's Petition was never read to its end because the magistrates in attendance, surrounded by large numbers of constables, volunteers and militiamen, found "sedition" to have been uttered quite early in its course and ordered the arrest of the platform and the dispersal of the meeting. This chapter may well close with a contemporary account of the scene:[2]

> . . . Notwithstanding the notices issued by the magistrates of the various police offices, and in despite of the appearance of large military detachments, a very numerous meeting of the London Corresponding Society took place in the field adjoining to the veterinary college in Pancras. To accommodate the vast assemblage of people who had collected, three tribunes were erected in different quarters of the field, round the principal of which the police magistrates, with a large body of constables, took their stand. Sir William Addington informed the persons in the tribune that the meeting had been illegally convoked, and declared his intention of reading the riot act. . . .
>
> Mr. Galloway, having read the advertisement of the London

[1] Cf. *New Annual Register*, 1797, Public Papers, pp. 242–3. It would almost seem that the overture was made at that date in the hope of inducing the French to lay aside any temptations to do something for the Nore mutineers.

[2] *Ibid.*, Principal Occurrences, pp. 120–1, under July 31st. H.O.65.1. shows how the Home Office, Bow St. and the seven District Police Magistracies of the Metropolis at Shadwell, Whitechapel, Union St., Queen's Square, Worship St., Marlborough St. and Hatton Garden grew efficient at combining some or all their forces as the occasion "demanded".

Corresponding Society, and the notice from Bow-street, called upon the magistrates to point out in what circumstances the meeting was illegal, and what provisions of the late acts had not been duly complied with. . . . No answer having been returned to this request, he proposed Mr. Tuckey as chairman for the day, who, after returning thanks . . . proceeded to read the petition and remonstrance to the king. Scarcely, however, had he entered upon its contents when he was interrupted: Sir William Addington insisting that the riot act had been read. A gentleman on the tribune declared he had not heard it, and in this declaration he was joined by the whole of the surrounding multitude. Sir W. Addington persisted to aver the fact. "Then, my fellow citizens," said the gentleman, "we are bound to disperse in peace within a hour. I conjure you to depart, and believe that it will be shortly seen, whether Bow-street magistrates are to be the interpreters of the laws of England." Upon this many persons retired from the ground, and Sir William Addington commanded the constables to take into custody the above-mentioned gentleman, and Mr. Tuckey, the chairman. The military were ordered to enter the field, and after galloping about it for an hour, and taking up two or three persons more, the meeting was dissolved.

The persons taken into custody were . . . brought to Bow-street office in the evening . . . and were admitted to bail, themselves in 100 l. each, and two sureties in 50 l. each. When they left the office they were drawn to their homes by the populace. . . .

"At the meetings of the London Corresponding Society, for above two years before this time [1798], it had been avowed that the object of the Society was to form a republic, by the assistance of France. Reform in Parliament, or even annual elections, or universal suffrage, were therefore no longer mentioned.... Meetings were held, to contrive the means of procuring arms, to enable them to co-operate with a French force in case of invasion.... The leading members of the disaffected societies were also in the habit of frequenting an occasional meeting, which was held at a cellar in Furnivall's Inn, and was first formed for the purpose of reading the libellous and treasonable publication, called *The Press*. It was particularly attended by Arthur O'Connor and O'Coigly... and by the persons chiefly instrumental in carrying on correspondence with the Irish conspirators; and secret consultations were repeatedly held there, with a view to projects, which were thought to be too dangerous and desperate to be brought forward in any of the larger societies. Among these plans, was that of effecting a general insurrection, at the same moment, in the metropolis, and throughout the country, and of directing it to the object of seizing or assassinating the king, the royal family, and many members of both houses of parliament.

"Attempts were, at the same time, made to form, in London, upon the plan of the United Irishmen, the Society of United Englishmen, or United Britons.... Most of the societies through England, which had used to correspond with the London Corresponding Society, had also about this time adopted the same plan of forming societies of United Englishmen... and the influence of the destructive principles from which they proceeded, was still farther extended by the establishment of clubs, among the lowest classes of the community, which were open to all persons paying one penny, and in which songs were sung, toasts given, and language held, of the most seditious nature.

"Information having been received of a meeting of United Englishmen, to be held at a house in Clerkenwell, warrants of arrest were issued, and persons were apprehended on the 18th of April 1798.... Information having also been received of an extraordinary meeting of the delegates and secretary of the London Corresponding Society,... on the 19th

of April 1798, the persons there assembled were likewise arrested. . . .

"It appeared, that about forty divisions of United Englishmen had been formed in London; about twenty of which had their regular places and days of meeting; and that many similar societies were forming in different parts of the country. . . . At Manchester, and in the adjacent country in particular, the plan of these conspiracies was extending itself in the most alarming manner. . . . A society of United Englishmen had been established in and about Manchester before the year 1797. In the beginning of that year it consisted of about fifty divisions, and in the year 1798 had extended to about eighty. . . . This society has been particularly active in the most wicked attempts to seduce the soldiers. . . . It frequently sent delegates to places in the neighbourhood, and to various parts of Yorkshire, Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire, and Cheshire . . . Liverpool also became the seat of another central society. . . ."

From the hair-raising descriptions of conspiracy in the *Report of the Committee of Secrecy of the British House of Commons*, March 1799.

"The renewal of a General War upon the Continent . . . cannot be too deeply deprecated. It would be an act of more dire temerity than its commencement before; and the worst of evils, in every direction, may be its fatal consequence.

The futility of the Minister's warlike projects, and the emptiness of his pompous phrases, have already been detected. Let not the proposal of a new war for the DELIVERANCE OF EUROPE delude the good sense of the English Nation. Without our inauspicious interference Europe will be safe; and without our foolish obstinacy to retain the conquered settlements of Spain and Holland, the hazards of internal revolution will be removed by a General Peace . . . and a timely, just, and temperate Reformation of Parliament."

Wyvill Papaers, VI, Appendix 52–3, reproduce a Wyvill pamphlet of 1799 indicative of the efforts to revive the "moderate" Parliamentary Reform cause and to stop the War.

DURING the summer of 1797 Government's attention was largely concentrated on mutinous Ireland and the peace negotiations proceeding at Lille. As early as August it was obvious that the main difficulty at Lille would be the French Government's insistence on the return both of its own captured colonies and those of its allies, Spain and the Batavian Republic. Britain's three enemies had nothing reciprocal to offer though some play was apparently made with the idea that France would be entitled to special compensation if it agreed to sign peace on *status quo ante bellum* terms with Britain's one remaining ally on the Continent, Portugal. Malmesbury made it plain that the British Government considered itself to be making the largest concessions in offering to recognise France's European annexations and return France's colonies. It could go no farther, and there was no intention of restoring Trinidad to a Spain, still allied with France, or Ceylon and the Cape to the Batavian Republic. Towards the end of September negotiations were at a deadlock, and in October they were abandoned.[1] Fortunately for the British Government, splendid news arrived in mid-October of an important naval victory over the Dutch at Camperdown. And from the remarkable outburst of popular rejoicing that followed,[2] it must have become obvious, even at Paris, that Pitt's internal difficulties had been over-estimated. Pitt was, for example, already gaining considerably from the perceptible revulsion of feeling among the important minority of British professional men who had retained some sympathy for the French Republic so long as it seemed to be facing a superior monarchical coalition, bent on its destruction.[3] But

[1] Cf. *Papers which passed in the Late Negotiation for Peace at Lille*, a collection of fifty-four documents presented to the House of Commons in November. Much additional material will, of course, be found in *Diaries and Correspondence of the first Earl of Malmesbury*, iii, 369–599, and in Foreign Secretary Grenville's Correspondence in the Fortescue MSS., Vol. III. It is interesting, for example, to find Pitt authorizing concession on Ceylon and the final break-down mainly due to internal politics in France.

[2] Cf. *New Annual Register*, 1797, Principal Occurrences, p. 161, under October 16th: "There was a general illumination in the metropolis . . . in celebration of Admiral Duncan's victory. The mansion-house, admiralty, theatres, and other public buildings were splendidly illuminated. Few events have given rise to more general and ardent demonstrations of joy."

[3] The *Farington Diary* contains some important evidence here. Joseph Farington, a very conservative R.A., had sometimes been distressed by the "democratic" inclinations of certain of his brother-artists. In 1797, however, the *Diary* may be found reporting under October 13th: "Downman called—rejoiced at news of victory [Camperdown], no democrat" and under October

dislike of French conquests, annexations and partitions had been specially stimulated by Buonaparte's treacherous and immoral destruction of the ancient Venetian Republic.[1] And there were those who were about to find themselves more easily converted by the biting wit of the notable *Anti-Jacobin* than they had been by the heavy thunder of Burke's denunciations.[2]

Despite relieving factors the reassembly of Parliament, on November 2nd, opened what was necessarily a more anxious time for Ministers. They could hardly be sure, for example, whether the explanation they had issued of the break-down of peace negotiations at Lille had really convinced the country that the fault lay entirely with the rapacity and insincerity of the French.[3] There was, after all, the final peace which the Paris Government had just signed with Austria at Campo Formio to urge against the theory that Paris had never really wanted peace but only the chance of blaming British Ministers for the continuation of hostilities.[4] Then, Ministers could hardly be sure of the effect that would be exercised on the country by the announced intention of the Opposition leaders to boycott the proceedings of Parliament so

29th: "Marchant came. . . . Had been with Romney, who is a convert from Democracy, and now says He believes 'Monarchy is best after all'."

[1] Wordsworth's view is plainly enough expressed in his famous sonnet of lament. And here is what the Foxite *New Annual Register* has to say of Buonaparte's violence: "In censuring such proceedings as these, we flatter ourselves our readers will not consider us as inconsistent. . . . When the nascent liberties of France were attacked by a combination of despotic powers on the continent, we deprecated what we esteemed a most unjustifiable aggression, an interference not warranted by the law of nations, or by the principles of justice—when France in her turn becomes an oppressor, the voice of truth and justice will proclaim her infamy, and will censure the inconsistency, the wickedness of her rulers." Even the less violent course taken with the Genoese Republic was thus pronounced upon by the *New Annual Register*: "Whether the change will ultimately prove for the happiness of the people or not, time only will determine; all that can at present be said upon the subject is, that the part which the French acted in the business was wholly unjustifiable."

[2] *The Anti-Jacobin or Weekly Examiner* first appeared on Monday, November 20th at the price of 6*d.* and in the form of sixteen closely-printed and double-columned folio pages. Though principally remembered for its satirical skits, a good deal of journalistic hard-hitting was done in the weekly commentary on the Paris Press and the weekly gibbeting of the "Lies", "Misrepresentations", and "Mistakes" of the Opposition Press in London. The monthly *Anti-Jacobin Review* succeeded the weekly in July 1798.

[3] The explanation had been published as the *Declaration of the King of Great Britain to the People, respecting the Rupture of the late Negotiation.* It was dated at Westminster, October 25th.

[4] The Treaty of Campo Formio had been signed on October 17th and ratified by the Directory on October 26th. It is probable that Austria obtained better terms in consequence of the French anxiety to display a pacific character after the break-down with Britain at Lille.

long as they were completely dictated by a Government that was every day dragging the country nearer bankruptcy and ruin. But during the opening weeks of the Session, at any rate, Ministers found few difficulties.[1] Real trouble was to come after November 24th when Pitt announced an estimated expenditure of 25½ millions and his intention of imposing heavier new taxation than any yet attempted hitherto. Since hostilities had begun in February 1793, the bulk of new taxation had been imposed, not to meet the capital cost of current war-expenses, but merely the annual interest on that capital cost, raised as loan, and raised on increasingly onerous terms. Now Pitt determined that Government credit could no longer stand a new loan flotation for perhaps nineteen millions with the lenders asked to face the spectacle of Ministers unwilling or unable to extract part of current war-costs from taxes instead of borrowing. Pitt, in short, proposed to triple the Assessed Taxes in a way which would leave him merely twelve millions to borrow for the year. According to the Prime Minister, the full tripling of the taxes on male servants, horses, carriages, dogs and watches, and the somewhat lesser increase intended, in many cases, on the house and window duties, could not amount to an income tax of ten per cent even in the case of the wealthiest entitled to no reductions or exemptions. And, on December 4th, when more detailed information was given before the enactment of the plan, a disarming picture was drawn of the way in which the Assessed Taxes increase would be scaled down for the small payer until even total exemption from the increase would be obtainable by all who had hitherto paid less than £1.[2]

The comparatively heavy increase of taxes, proposed by Government was, of course, Opposition's great opportunity, and the more

[1] Cf. *Annual Register*, 1798, History, p. 173, for Wilberforce helping them by refusing to take Fox's absence tragically: "As to the melancholy and silent anguish ascribed to him [Fox], it appeared from a public newspaper of the eleventh of October, that his melancholy was merely of a temporary nature; for though the right honourable gentleman had been found beginning the day of his annual festivity with regret and lamentations for the hopeless condition of his country, the same vehicle of intelligence had informed us, that after several toasts were drank, with great applause, the conviviality of the evening was heightened by some jovial songs. . . ."

[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 186–7. The exemption limit was as high as £3 in certain cases where considerable premises, liable to house and window duty, were a prerequisite for the earning of a livelihood. Shop-keepers, inn-keepers, lodging-house proprietors and boarding-school owners were offered this alleviation in the hope, doubtless, of decreasing opposition. The Loyalists' big "voluntary contribution" to defence costs would have operated similarly.

so because the commercial and shop-keeping community considered itself to be unjustly treated in having its "precarious" earned income exposed to the same triple taxation as was placed upon the "permanent" income of the land- or fund-holder.[1] This early cry for a fiscal differentiation between "earned" and "unearned" income is interesting, though it should not be misinterpreted as anticipating twentieth-century "democracy". The great mass of the poor were hardly affected by the Assessed Taxes; and the grievance of the large merchants and shop-keepers of London and Westminster, who pushed the agitation, was not that their income was more morally acquired, because earned, than the landowner's but that it was much more "precarious", that is much more exposed to accidents of health, strength and markets. Fox naturally showed the greatest alacrity in obeying the instructions of his Westminster constituents[2] and he returned to Parliament, not merely with the best possible excuse for suspending the boycott he had declared of its proceedings, but with the certainty of more "respectable" support than he had enjoyed since the beginning of the war. Fox's return to Parliament on December 14th became, indeed, the occasion of a remarkable popular ovation.[3]

That same evening the House heard a sweeping attack not so much upon the Triple Assessment—Fox knew that he might need something similar in the not impossible event of his coming to power—but on the whole range of policy and finance that had made the Triple Assessment necessary. It is worth quoting from the *Annual Register*'s synopsis of Fox's broadside against Government.[4]

[1] Cf. *New Annual Register*, 1797, Principal Occurrences, pp. 172–3, for the City of London objections. Among them was the alleged operation of the new taxation "chiefly upon the middle and lower classes" rendering "it impossible for them to gain a subsistence" and "that property does not appear to have been made the basis of the intended tax, persons having only a precarious income, acquired by their labour and industry in trade, being obliged to pay in the same proportion as persons who have a permanent income, proceeding from landed or funded property".

[2] Cf. *Ibid.*: "The city of Westminster, and the principal wards and parishes in London and Westminster, held meetings about this time, in which resolutions similar to the above [those of the City] were passed."

[3] Cf. *Annual Register*, 1798, History, p. 192: "When Mr. Fox passed through the lobby of the house of commons, which, as well as the gallery, was full of what, in the language of parliament, are called strangers, there was a great burst of applause and clapping of hands. Every one in the gallery arose, as by one impulse, and a general sensation of somewhat interesting pervaded the whole house."

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 193.

"Mr. Fox," wrote the *Annual Register*, "declared his opinion to be now what it had long been, that the present administration of this country had, by the unfortunate blindness of that house, and the too easy temper of the people . . . so impaired and deranged its finances, so encreased its embarrassments, and above all, so disfigured its constitution, that no services of any individual in the course of the closest attendance, would be sufficient to balance the mischiefs that must arise from giving countenance to an opinion, that the decisions of that house were always the result of full discussion. Nothing short of a total reform of the late system . . . could save us from utter ruin. With regard to the plan proposed, of voting part of the supplies within the year, Mr. Fox thought that it came with a very ill grace from those who had contributed so much already to the burdens to be transferred to posterity; but which they are afraid farther to increase. When they are absolutely under the necessity of stopping in their usual career, they turn round, and generously call upon us, in order to support their measures, to bear an intolerable burden ourselves. . . .

It was after a speech of a similar nature, made early in January 1798, that Fox had the pleasure of seeing Government's majority on the third reading of the Triple Assessment Bill fall to one of 202 votes against 127.[1] And, meanwhile, on December 19th at the great official Thanksgiving display for the British naval victories of the war, the most conspicuous and most discussed incident was certainly the way in which street-mobs had singled out Pitt for abuse whilst applauding almost everyone else.[2]

It is doubtful, however, if Opposition helped itself by a much criticised display on January 24, 1798, Fox's birthday. Two thousand persons assembled to celebrate the occasion which was made the more notable by Opposition's definite acceptance of Parliamentary Reform as a party aim. The Duke of Norfolk, flanked by the Duke of Bedford, was in the chair, and speeches were made and enthusiastic toasts drunk that were regarded as inflammatory in the extreme. Here, for example, are the Duke of Norfolk's words when calling the health of Charles Fox:[3]

[1] Cf. *Annual Register*, 1798, History, p. 202. See also *Diary and Correspondence of Charles Abbot, Lord Colchester*, i, 132: "Mr. Fox spoke from half-past eleven till three in the morning. Mr. Pitt from three till four."

[2] *Annual Register*, 1797, Appendix to the Chronicle, p. 83: "Mr. Pitt was very grossly insulted by the populace on his way to the cathedral; in consequence of which he did not return in his own carriage, but stopped to dine with the Speaker and some other gentlemen in Doctors Commons. He was escorted home in the evening by a party of the London light horse."

[3] *Ibid.*, 1798, Chronicle under January 24th.

We are met, in a moment of most serious difficulty, to celebrate the birth of a man dear to the friends of freedom. I shall only recal to your memory, that, not twenty years ago, the illustrious George Washington had not more than two thousand men to rally round him when his country was attacked. America is now free. This day full two thousand men are assembled in this place. I leave you to make the application.

And after further toasts had been pledged to the "Rights of the People", "Constitutional Redress of the Wrongs of the People", "A speedy and effectual Reform in the Representation of the People in Parliament", "The People of Ireland: and may they be speedily restored to the Blessings of Law and Liberty", there came the culminating point of the evening. Thanking the assembly for the applause that had been given to his conduct in the chair, the Duke of Norfolk called yet another toast to "our Sovereign's Health, the Majesty of the People", and this almost republican sentiment was received with "rapturous" acclamation. Few responsible people could have considered that the subsequent dismissal of the Duke from his Lord-Lieutenancy and Militia command was wholly undeserved.[1]

During the first half of 1798, the anxieties of Government seem to have been almost as great as they had been in the darkest days of 1797. The French Directory was known to have offered General Buonaparte every facility for organising invasion, and the Irish situation was plainly such as would have given him excellent prospects of success if he could have landed in Ireland only a proportion of the troops available. Nor with so daring a soldier as Buonaparte, occupied, to all appearances, with his new duties as commander of the "Army of the Ocean", could the possibility be neglected that, in the expectation of over-much British concentration on Ireland, he might venture an attack upon Britain itself.[2]

[1] Cf. *Ibid.*, on "the seditious and daring tendency" of the Duke's speaking and the toasts drunk by the meeting.

[2] Cf. Fortescue MSS., iv, 69–70, for "Secret Intelligence from France" according to which there were plans for turning England, Scotland and Ireland into three separate and distinct republics among whom would be divided such portions of the Empire and Fleet not claimed by France, Spain or Holland. "*Grand Mesures*" would be taken to remove the ruling groups, while deportation would be the lot even of Lord Moira and Fox, who was described as "Faux patriot; ayant souvent insulté la Nation Française dans ses discours, et particulièrement en 1786." Four Dukes, including the Foxite Dukes of Bedford and Norfolk were to be ruined by the demand for "Contributions patriotiques" of 400,000 guineas each. The English Directory would consist of Paine, Tooke, Sharp, Thelwall and Lord Lansdowne (with a heterogeneous ministry of anti-Pittites including Tierney as Minister of Justice; Waithman as Minister of

Ministers obviously had ample reason to encourage all the many Volunteer organisations that were forming to help the Regulars and Militia to repel an invader. But there were problems even here. A number of sensational arrests, for example, made on March 1st, seemed to convince Ministers of a close and "guilty" connection between the United Irishmen and France and a further and "guiltier" connection between British malcontent societies on the one hand and France and Ireland on the other.[1] Accordingly, when the Committee of the London Corresponding Society decided to invite its members to become Volunteers, Ministers, with the help of informers, saw reason to assume that this volunteering was intended to make it easier for the Society to possess itself of arms and military training to turn against Government. Ministers had, in fact, issued orders which apparently permitted the arrest of the entire Committee of the London Corresponding Society immediately their resolution on volunteering was taken on the evening of April 19th.[2] And next day, a message from the King was brought into Parliament indicating the necessity for another suspension of Habeas Corpus so that "the communications and correspondence of traitorous and disaffected persons and societies" could be prevented from encouraging the enemy. Habeas Corpus Suspension was, of course, re-enacted, as the Aliens Bill had already been, and, in point of fact, some Corresponding Society committee men were held imprisoned but untried for almost three years.[3]

France; and Hardy, the treason-suspect of 1794, as Minister of Police). The Scottish Directory was to contain Muir, Sinclair, Cameron, Semple and Lauderdale and the Irish Directory, N. Tandy, E. Fitzgerald, H. Rowan, A. O'Connor and another.

[1] Cf. *Annual Register*, 1798, Chronicle under March 2nd: "Yesterday Arthur O'Connor, proprietor of a newspaper, called the *Press*, printed in Dublin; John Binns, a celebrated member of the corresponding society; W. Alley; J. Favey . . . and Patrick Leary were brought to town from Margate . . . by . . . two of the Bow-street officers, escorted by a party of light dragoons . . . they had been taken into custody, on suspicion of holding a treasonable correspondence with the French government, and of having an intention to obtain a passage from Margate to the nearest port in France . . . a paper was found purporting to be an Address from a Secret Committee in Ireland to the Executive Directory of France. . . ."

[2] Cf. Add. MSS. 27808 (Place Papers), for an account which throws some little light on the way in which one wing of the Corresponding Society had been playing with the United Englishmen conspiracy. Ministers apparently feared, among other things, widespread incendiarism from this conspiracy.

[3] G. Wallas, *Life of Francis Place*, p. 28, gives twenty-eight as the number of those detained without trial for three years. It also claims for Place the principal credit for organising the collection and distribution of subscriptions intended to help the wives and dependents of the imprisoned men whose

Meanwhile Fox's efforts to impede Ministers' alleged "destruction" of British and Irish liberties were hardly aided by the dreadful record of greed and violence which the French had just been piling up in Switzerland and Italy. On May 20th Fox was desperate enough to undertake a step of most doubtful wisdom. It shall be described in the language of the *Annual Register* which reported succinctly:[1]

> The meeting of the whig-club, at Freemason's Tavern, the 20th inst. was remarkable, on account of Mr. Fox's avowal of some bold and extraordinary sentiments; who said,
>
> "I'll give you a toast, than which I think there cannot be a better, according to the principles of this club; I mean the sovereignty of the people of Great Britain."
>
> He then in a speech fully declaratory of his sentiments in these critical times, condemned ministers, in the most pointed manner, for the measures adopted in Ireland, and which measures they certainly intended should soon be enforced in England. Mr. Fox, however, said, that he would be one of the first to aid in repelling any foreign enemy, under whatever government England might be. He compared the ministry with the directory of France; affirmed that he was resolved upon retirement; but that he would be happy to come forward whenever the country demanded his services. He entertained no apprehensions of an invasion; and was fully persuaded, that should the enemy be rash enough to land even with a considerable force, that the spirit of the people would soon rout them, and destroy the invaders.

The speech was hardly politic however much Fox had been wounded by the King's late removal of his name from the list of Privy Councillors.[2] On the very day Fox's speech was delivered, General Buonaparte had sailed with a formidable armament against Malta and Egypt. And on May 24th an Irish insurrection began.

The rebellion in Ireland, undertaken though it was in the most unfortunate circumstances, was dangerous enough to furnish Opposition with the chance of making important demonstrations

detention-conditions at Coldbath Fields Prison, be it noted, became the subject of a lively political dispute during the course of 1799 which made Sir Francis Burdett a popular hero.

[1] *Annual Register*, 1798, Chronicle, p. 41.

[2] There is a well-known Gillray caricature on the subject, dated May 12th. Fox's removal was apparently the result of a speech delivered at the Whig Club on May 1st in which, though inviting the "friends of liberty" to avert a foreign yoke, he bade them remember "that in happier and more favourable times it will be equally their duty to use every effort to shake off the yoke of our English tyrants".

in both Houses.[1] And if there was no better division in the Commons, during June, than one of 66 against 212, and the best in the Lords was one of 21 against 51, Opposition could, nevertheless, assert with truth that it had cried for years that rebellion in Ireland was inevitable unless there was a complete "change of system" in its government. Though Ministers closed the Session, on June 29th, with a confident speech from the Throne, and the fate of the rebellion[2] was, indeed, already sealed, Opposition's view of the need of a "complete change of system" in Ireland was soon being secretly shared by Pitt, by Cornwallis, the new military Lord-Lieutenant, and by Castlereagh, the new Chief Secretary. Results of epoch-making importance were destined to follow.

But during the summer and autumn of 1798 the "pacification" of Ireland was not Ministers' only task, nor Ireland's future the only subject which gave them concern. After news of Buonaparte's great successes at Malta, Alexandria and Cairo, there came astonishing intelligence of Nelson's tremendous naval victory of August 1st which had marooned France's best army and general in Egypt. The effect on the European continent was startling, and Ministers soon saw the possibility of constructing a new Coalition with real chances of overthrowing the corrupt and greedy tyrants of Paris who had, by now, wronged and insulted almost every people and sovereign in Europe.[3] Meanwhile the nation, strikingly reanimated by the completeness of Nelson's great victory and the renewed readiness on the Continent to resist French aggression, was felt to be in a mood permitting Parliament to be reopened, on

[1] Cf. *Annual Register*, 1798, History, p. 225, for allegations of "torture" and "atrocities" that could already be made by Opposition Peers against the conduct of those fighting the rebellion.

[2] Cf. Fortescue MSS., iv, 233: "The official despatches from the Lord Lieutenant, of the eighth instant, confirm the defeat of the rebels at Ross with great slaughter on the fifth [June]." But the surrender of two rebel "generals" and thirteen "colonels" with their "army's" five thousand pikes and fire-locks and the cattle, horses, sheep and plunder they had commandeered was not offered till July 5th.

[3] Cf. *Anti-Jacobin Review*, October 1798, pp. 491–3: "Our naval victory in the Mediterranean has already been productive of the happiest effects, in giving spirit and vigour to the councils and operations of many of the continental powers. . . . The Ottoman and Russian fleets formed a junction on the 20th of September, and proceeded to the Archipelago, whence, there is little doubt, but that the French will be speedily expelled. A Russian army, of considerable force, has already entered the Austrian territory (in friendship), and the Emperor of Germany has taken every possible precaution for opposing the common enemy. . . . The King of Prussia still remains undecided. . . . At Naples a determined spirit of patriotism prevails in the King, and among the people. . . ."

November 20th, with a King's Speech of ringing confidence. It was, in these circumstances, that Pitt's more ardent supporters found it almost criminal that Opposition politicians should still be occupied in denouncing repression "atrocities" in Ireland and Opposition journalists in filling the columns of the *Courier*,[1] the *Morning Chronicle*[2] and the *Publicans' Advertiser*[3] with suggestions that it would take more than the Battle of the Nile to destroy the French Republic. The tone and matter of public controversy, during the autumn of 1798, may be suggested by the following venom from the *Anti-Jacobin Review*:[4]

> While our gallant tars were employed in gathering laurels abroad, a factious demagogue was occupied in sowing the seeds of dissention at home. On the 10th of October, Mr. Fox met a party of his constituents at the Shakspear . . . on the gross indecency of a Representative of the People neglecting his duty in Parliament, and choosing a tavern as the place for promulgating his opinions . . . we shall forbear to comment. . . .
>
> Surely never was the understanding of any assembly of men so grossly insulted as was that of the persons here met, by Mr. Fox's observations on Ireland . . . that he should . . . renew all the stale lying imputations of *tyranny*, *cruelty*, and *injustice* to the government of Ireland, is an instance of such determined profligacy as seldom disgraces even the annals of faction itself!
>
> He professes to "*excrate cruelty*". But what in his estimation constitutes *cruelty?* The just punishment of rebels and traitors. These are the sole objects of *his* commiseration. These, exclusively, command *his* pity, and extort *his* tears. The murder, in cold blood, of loyal nobles, gentry, and yeomanry; the numberless acts of atrocious barbarity committed on the protestants of Ireland; the conflagration of their houses; the destruction of their property; the massacre of their families; the violation of their wives and daughters . . . these have not called

[1] Cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 485–6: "Soon after the news of Admiral Nelson's victory was received, the editor of that low Jacobin print, *The Courier*, anxious no doubt to revive the drooping spirits of his friends, very obligingly, by the mere magic of a pen, created for the French Republic, a most formidable navy, consisting of no less than 73 ships of the line and 107 frigates. . . . We are farther told that the ships stolen from the Venetians and the Maltese, and the new ships built within the last year are not included in the list. . . ."

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 498: "The *rebellion* that our brave armies could not quell in months, the editor of the *Morning Chronicle* has extinguished . . . in one minute. . . ."

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 486: "We think it necessary to state . . . for the information of a numerous description of persons, the publicans, that *their own paper*, '*The Publicans' Advertiser*', has, of late, become a vehicle for the propagation of democratical principles . . . it behoves them immediately to remedy this evil. It will otherwise become a duty, on the part of the magistrates, to exercise *their* power, in the renewal of licences with peculiar circumspection. . . ."

[4] *Ibid.*, pp. 487–90.

forth, from the tender and humane mind of Mr. Fox, one solitary lamentation. . . .

The affirmation, that to send Representatives is only to send "*men for the sole purpose of being employed to register the edicts of a minister,*" is a libel upon Parliament so gross, that the man who uttered it, ought, the moment Parliament meets, to be sent to the Tower, and brought to condign punishment. It was for a libel precisely similar, that the proprietor of the *Morning Chronicle* suffered three months imprisonment in Newgate; a punishment infinitely too slight for the offence. . . .

Resolved that no opportunity for abusing the Ministers shall escape him, he [Fox] anticipates the taxes to be proposed in the ensuing Session, and condemns them *in toto*. The toasts given on this occasion were highly appropriate—the houses of Russel and Holland—Mess. Sheridan, Erskine, Grey, Tierney, W. Smith and Byng—a hopeful groupe! We wonder that Thelwall, Jones, Tooke and the Corresponding Crew were forgotten. Then followed the favourite toast of Robespierre, and of the five tyrants of France—"The Majesty of the People, and the cause of Liberty all over the world;" and "A speedy Peace with the *French Republic*;" in other words, *Success to the French Republic*. . . .

Sufficient has been quoted to show that Opposition and the Opposition Press were still, despite the great improvement in Pitt's situation after the Battle of the Nile, subjects of very real concern to Government. And here it may be noted that, during the past Session, Ministers had armed themselves not merely with a Habeas Corpus Suspension Act and an Aliens Act but with a third measure intended permanently to increase Government's power of supervising and prosecuting the Newspaper Press.[1] It is significant that, under this Newspaper Act of 1798, particulars had to be furnished to the Stamp Office of the printers, publishers and proprietors of every newspaper; copies of every issue had also to be delivered; and, finally, precautions had been taken against that insidious form of "seditious libel" consisting in printing alleged quotations from foreign newspapers. Here is the substance of one of the clauses, with what seems to have been a long history of pretended quotations behind it:[2]

[1] Unlike the other two Acts, which had a time limit, the newspaper measure was a permanent enactment. And its very title was revealing, being: "For preventing the mischiefs arising from the printing and publishing newspapers, and papers of a like nature, by persons not known, and for regulating the printing, &c., of such papers in other respects".

[2] From R. P. Tyrwhitt and T. W. Tyndale, *A Digest of the Public General Statutes* (1822), i, 523–4.

Every person who shall print or publish in any newspaper, &c. printed or published in England, any matter having a tendency to excite hatred or contempt of His Majesty, and the constitution and government of these kingdoms, as having been previously printed and published in some foreign paper or print which hath not been so previously printed, shall on conviction thereof be committed to prison, for not less than 6 or more than 12 months, and be liable to such other punishment as may by law be inflicted on persons guilty of high misdemeanours; and in proceeding against any person for having printed such matter, the person accused shall prove that the same has been previously printed. . . .

Government's journalistic watchdogs were all the keener in their supervision of Opposition politicians and newspaper-writers in that quite ticklish political work faced Ministers during the Session, begun on November 20, 1798. A new 10 per cent Income Tax, well below war-necessities though it now was, seemed certain to arouse dangerous resentments despite Government's view that it would be found more satisfactory than the Triple Assessment.[1] The decision to ask for a renewal of Habeas Corpus Suspension would not only give Opposition favourable ground for defending "liberty" but would furnish additional opportunities for bewailing the lot of those unfortunates whose imprisonment, without trial, would thus be further continued. Then, any suggestions or preparations, on Government's side, for a second Coalition against France would obviously be met, from Opposition, by telling reminders of the selfishness, hypocrisy and ruin which had attended the first. The plan of absorbing Ireland into a United Kingdom, on which Ministers were known to be set, would, moreover, afford Opposition critics unusual chances of stressing both Government's alleged responsibility for the rebellion of 1798 and the folly of attempting to force a Union on an unwilling Ireland. Finally, the project for suppressing by law the various political clubs of the Corresponding Society and United Irishmen types promised to absorb a great deal of Government effort in Parliament. Those anti-Jacobin enthusiasts who dreamed that Committee of Secrecy revelations might even produce a further

[1] Cf. *Anti-Jacobin Review*, October 1798, p. 487, for the plan as discussed in advance: "it will be required that the individual shall pay a certain portion of his income, *not less* than the proportion fixed, to commissioners appointed for the purpose, and sworn to secrecy; that if such commissioners shall be satisfied that the sum paid really amount to such proportion, no farther enquiry will be made; but if they shall have reason to entertain a different opinion, they will be authorised to interogate the party upon oath, and to institute such an enquiry as shall ascertain the fact".

case for muzzling, if not suppressing, organisations like the Whig Club went a good deal beyond the Parliamentary possibilities.[1] A Government, for example, which would have suggested extending to "private meetings", like those of the Whig Club, the criminal code applied against public meetings under the "Two Acts" of 1795 would instantly have lost the support of large groups of "independent members". In point of fact, Ministers determined to allow the "Two Acts" to expire at the end of their three-year term rather than add their renewal to a Sessional programme, which, with Habeas Corpus Suspension, "Seditious Societies" Suppression, and new Press precautions extending even to letter-founders and type-makers, seemed already dangerously weighted against "liberty".[2]

Throughout 1799, Fox continued to absent himself from Parliament in the hope of awakening the country to what he considered to be Parliament's degradation into a mere tool of a Minister growing ever more harmful and arbitrary. He was particularly worried by the increasing machinery Government was employing to bridle the Press, and some of the clauses of the 1799 legislation to regulate the printing industry were, from Opposition's standpoint, even more ominous than those of the Newspaper Act of 1798.[3] Even the trade in printing requisites was brought under supervision, while elaborate measures were taken to establish responsibility for every handbill or poster. The briefest summary of five of the clauses will, perhaps, suffice to explain Fox's despair at the lengths to which Government was able

[1] Cf. *Anti-Jacobin Review*, March 1799, pp. 350–1: "The Report of the Secret Committee of the House of Commons unfolds a complicated scene. . . . To us it appears indispensibly necessary that a new law should be enacted for the suppression of *private meetings*; at least for imposing such restrictions on those meetings as would prevent them from being rendered instrumental to purposes of sedition, or treason. Every club, or periodical assembly of people, of any denomination, should be compelled to take out a regular licence from a Magistrate, on the application for which, the nature and object of the club, or meeting, should be particularly specified; the Magistrate should be empowered to attend whenever he chose; and the occupier of every public or private house tolerating meetings, in defiance of the act, should suffer some severe and exemplary punishment. . . ."

[2] Any full account of the coercive record of 1799 would, of course, mention the well-known act against workmen's combinations. It is not mentioned in the text because it was not included in the Government's original programme but added late in the Session.

[3] The printing legislation was the second part of the Act for suppressing seditious and treasonable societies, the 39 Geo. III, cap. 79. The Act's first twenty-two clauses were concerned with the societies and the following sixteen with printing precautions.

to go during the confident anti-Jacobin season of the spring of 1799. Here is the summary:[1]

Every person having any printing press or types for printing shall cause a notice thereof . . . to be delivered to the clerk of the peace for the county . . . or place where it is intended to be used, who shall grant a certificate . . . for 1s. only . . . and transmit an attested copy to a principal secretary of state. . . .

Every person carrying on business as a letter founder, or maker or seller of types for printing, or of printing presses, shall cause notice of his intention to carry on the same to be delivered to the clerk of the peace . . . who shall grant a certificate in like form for 1s. only . . . and transmit an attested copy to a principal secretary of state. . . .

Every person who shall sell types or printing presses shall keep a fair account in writing of all persons to whom any shall be sold, producing the same to any justice requiring it. . . .

Every person who shall print any paper for hire or profit, shall carefully preserve one copy at least of every paper so printed by him, for 6 calendar months, on which shall be written or printed . . . the name and abode of the persons employed to print the same. . . .

If any justice . . . shall . . . have reason to suspect that any printing press, or types . . . are used or kept for use, without notice given or certificate obtained under this act, or in any place not included in such notice or certificate, he may, by warrant, direct any constable . . . with any persons called to his assistance, to enter into any such house in the day time, and to secure and carry away the press, types, and printed papers found therein. . . .

In the same Act, which decreed this tremendous apparatus of precaution against "seditious publications", was ordained a parallel apparatus against "seditious societies". Five societies were first suppressed by name on the strength of the alarmist *Report* of a new 1799 Committee of Secrecy—the United Englishmen, United Scotsmen, United Irishmen, United Britons and the London Corresponding Society;[2] all other Corresponding

[1] Adapted from R. P. Tyrwhitt and T. W. Tyndale's *A Digest of the Public General Statutes*, ii, 1279.

[2] This *Report of the Committee of Secrecy of the House of Commons; ordered to be printed 15th March, 1799* was inexcusably and deliberately alarmist. According to Place (Add. MSS. 35143, f. 63), who has a bitter condemnation of the "most scandalous" exaggerations of the Secrecy Report, its "*forty divisions* of United Englishmen" that "had been formed in London" was "wholly false, there was not *one such division*. The society was only in an incipient state" with members amounting to hardly more than a dozen when they were arrested on April 18th twenty-four hours before the London Corresponding Society arrests. Place should have known because he had been appealed to when the United Britons plan was mooted by three or four headstrong would-be revolutionaries and had even attended a meeting to warn them, he said, of their dangers. To confirm his account, Place instanced the fact that when he planned a relief

Societies next passed under the ban; and then all societies taking unlawful paths or oaths not required by law, or possessing secret committees, or keeping no list of members and committee men open to inspection, or, finally, having a number of branches, capable of independent action. The legislation was, in fact, sweeping enough to act as a check for many years on all extra-parliamentary attempts to organise national parties, the Chartists for instance, finding great legal difficulties, between 1840 and 1842, in founding a National Charter Association, that should be free of all criminal taint under the 39 George III, cap. 79. And even in 1799, the necessity for making large provision for exceptions was so evident that religious and charitable societies were excluded of right, from the purview of the Act, and special and rather laborious arrangements made for Justices' certification of Free-masons' Lodges and the like. To examine the further apparatus set up for securing that no public or private house should be employed for the meeting of any "illegal confederacy" or for unlicensed lecturing and pamphlet- and newspaper-consultation is to cease to wonder at Fox's despair for the cause of "liberty". It becomes plainer, too, how at a time when "illegal confederacies" and "unlawful meetings" were much in the Parliamentary majority's mind, an annoying strike of journeymen-millwrights became the occasion for a general act against "illegal confederacies" in the industrial sphere.[1] It is characteristic of the haste, prejudice and industrial ignorance with which the Parliamentary majority acted that its Combination Act of 1799 had, even by its own standards of right and wrong, to be largely amended in the following year when workmen's petitions gave Opposition the requisite information and opportunity.

The new attacks on "liberty", which were being registered on the Statute Book during the summer of 1795, are not, however, fully explained until the intoxicating atmosphere of anti-Jacobin confidence is remembered which ruled in the first deliriously successful months of the Second Coalition. For the prorogation of Parliament, on July 12th, Ministers ventured to compose a King's Speech almost prophesying complete victory.[2]

fund for the dependents of those arrested, United Britons and Corresponding Society prisoners together totalled only "twenty-seven or twenty-eight".

[1] The story has been told with great completeness by J. L. and Barbara Hammond in their well-known *Town Labourer*.

[2] *Annual Register*, 1799, State Papers, p. 207. Cf. also Fortescue MSS, v, 159–61, for the Foreign Secretary's easy assumption that hesitating Prussia had

"The favourable appearances," the King reported, "which I announced to you at the commencement of the present session, have since been followed by successes beyond my most sanguine expectations.

"By the progress of the imperial arms, under the command of the Archduke Charles of Austria, a great part of Switzerland has already recovered its ancient religion, laws and liberties: and the uninterrupted and brilliant victories of the combined armies under the command of field-marshal Suwarroff, have in the short period which has elapsed since the opening of the campaign, nearly accomplished the deliverance of Italy. . . .

"The decision and energy which distinguish the councils of my ally the emperor of Russia, and the intimate union and concert happily established between us, will enable me to employ, to the greatest advantage, the powerful means which you have entrusted to me, for establishing on permanent grounds, the security and honour of this country, and the liberty and independence of Europe."

almost lost the chance of profiting herself and the coalition since Holland was about to be liberated without her and the hard bargains she was trying to drive. "If Holland is rapidly recovered (say in the first or second month)", wrote Lord Grenville to his special envoy at Berlin, "what is it we are paying the Prussians to do for the remainder of the year? The article about not acting with us in any measures respecting the interior of France . . . we understand by it that Prussia means to remain on the defensive and not co-operate in our attack on the territory of France itself, which yet affords the only means of trying the experiment of the Royal Standard. Can we then be paying Prussia for doing nothing. . . !"

CHAPTER VIII

BUONAPARTE, FIRST CONSUL

"Your Committee have thus detailed the proceedings of the disaffected carried on in the metropolis [since 1799], and as directed principally to its disturbance; but they would afford a very inadequate representation of the extent of the confederacy, if in proceeding to advert to the state of other parts of the country, and even of Ireland, they omitted to notice the concert which in some measure pervades the whole. . . . While the disaffected in London confined themselves, in the course of the last autumn [1800], to loose though violent expressions of discontent, and endeavoured to evade discovery by avoiding any written evidence . . . the same precaution was adopted by those of similar principles at Nottingham, accompanied by similar declarations of hopes arising from the dearness of provisions, and wishes for the aggravation rather than the alleviation of that calamity; and when early in the present year a systematic plan was first observed here, it first began to be rumoured among the disaffected there.

"At the same period, seditious emissaries were first detected endeavouring to excite insurrection among the manufacturers of different parts of Lancashire. . . . Dangerous meetings were disguised as in London, under the appearance of friendly societies for the relief of sick members: the persuasion of a general revolution shortly to take place, and consequently the inefficacy of all resistance, was studiously diffused. . . . On the same account, the numbers of those engaged in the confederacy were exaggerated, and stated sometimes as amounting to 60,000 trained to military exercise, at others, including Ireland, to no less than 1,500,000. . . . The principal of these emissaries are represented as delegated from London, York, Birmingham, Bristol, Sheffield, and other considerable towns, as well as from Ireland. . . . Two very numerous popular meetings were meanwhile held in a part of Lancashire early in April . . . at one of which a considerable number of persons were observed practising military exercises; but the principal object previous to the general explosion, if not intended as a part of it, was to convene a general meeting of districts in a central part of the island, and particularly of the populous and manufacturing parts of the counties of York, Lancaster, Chester and Derby, near which it was represented that a kind of congress of delegates, from six districts into which the kingdom was divided, had for some time been occasionally

sitting. The latest accounts from that part of the country announce, that this assembly has actually been held, at which many thousands from different parts of the country were collected. . . .

"The enterprizes and connections of the new society in the metropolis, were not, however, confined to foment the discontents . . . in our own country; they certainly were disposed . . . to avail themselves of any assistance that could be derived from the invasion of a foreign enemy, whose aid was solicited by some of their emissaries. . . ."

From the *Second Report of the Committee* [of Secrecy, 1801] *to the House of Commons. Presented May* 15, a typical piece of unqualified Anti-Jacobin alarmism, mingling into one pattern informers' wildly-magnified accounts of Trade Society activities from different parts of the country as well as "seditious" beer-house talk.

AFTER an unusually short Recess, Parliament, which had been prorogued on July 12th, was called together again on September 24, 1799. The main reason for the summons was the necessity for new legislation enabling Ministers to use the Militia in aid of the Regulars who had now been thrown, in conjunction with Orange volunteers and Russian auxiliaries, against the Batavian allies of the French. The King's Speech breathed great confidence in the victorious prospects of the Second Coalition though it half-admitted that a bloody repulse had followed the notable initial success of the British troops landed in North Holland. The speech is well worth quoting as indicating the war position.[1]

"In the short interval since the close of the last session," announced the King, "our situation and prospects have, under the blessing of Providence, improved beyond the most sanguine expectation. The abilities and valour of the commanders and troops of the combined imperial armies have continued to be eminently displayed. The deliverance of Italy may now be considered as secured . . . and I have had the heart-felt satisfaction of seeing the valour of my fleets and armies successfully employed to the assistance of my allies. . . .

"The kingdom of Naples has been rescued from the French yoke. . . . The French expedition to Egypt has continued to be productive of calamity and disgrace to our enemies, while its ultimate views against our eastern possessions have been utterly confounded. The desperate attempt which they have lately made to extricate themselves from their difficulties has been defeated by the courage of the Turkish forces, directed by the skill, and animated by the heroism, of a British naval officer . . . and the overthrow of that restless and perfidious power [Mysore], who instigated by the artifices, and deluded by the promises of the French, had entered into their ambitious and destructive projects in India, has placed the British interests in that quarter in a state of solid and permanent security. . . .

"There is, I trust, every reason to expect that the effort which I am making, for the deliverance of the United Provinces, will prove successful. The British arms have rescued from the possession of the enemy the principal port and naval arsenal of the Dutch republic; and although we have to regret the loss of many brave men in a subsequent attack . . . I have the strongest ground to expect that the skill of my generals, and the determined resolution . . . of my troops . . . will soon surmount every obstacle. . . .

Unfortunately for Ministers, the very hopeful forecast of the

[1] *Annual Register*, 1799, State Papers, pp. 208–9.

Dutch situation they had ventured upon in the King's Speech was singularly belied by the course of events. Even before Parliament was adjourned on October 12th, Ministers must have had good reason for anxiety, and when the Batavian general, Daendels, could not be won from the French side by the best Orange offers, the attacking forces saw themselves compelled to purchase an unmolested re-embarkation by the capitulation of October 19th—a capitulation under which 8000 captured enemy seamen, if not the Dutch fleet, had to be surrendered. Meanwhile the chance of overthrowing French domination in another vassal Republic—the Helvetian—had been lost owing to the mutual jealousy and incompatibility of the Austrian and Russian commands whose quarrels, indeed, already threatened to shipwreck the whole Coalition. By the end of October even the once-jubilant *Anti-Jacobin Review* was writing paragraphs as grave as the following:[1]

> Amidst the various vicissitudes of human life, the most painful task of the historian of human events is to trace the destructive progress of vice, and to mark the discomfiture of virtue. Such, unhappily, is our task at the present moment. After a series of victories, for their rapidity and importance almost unparalleled in history, which made the tyrants of the Luxembourg tremble on their blood-stained thrones, by one stroke of false policy, or, rather, by one act of political insanity, the face of affairs has been changed, and fearful expectations excited respecting the ultimate issue of a campaign, opened under the most propitious circumstances, and, till lately, conducted with the most consummate wisdom.

Then came another sensational occurrence, the *coup d'état* in France, effected on November 9th by General Buonaparte scarce a month after his return from his abandoned army in Egypt. There were optimists in Britain who interpreted the coup as a movement towards conservatism and possibly even towards a Bourbon restoration, and speculation on these lines did not cease even after Buonaparte had been declared First Consul under the new constitution promulgated on December 13th. And although the *Anti-Jacobin Review*, issued at the end of December, decried the optimistic gossip that was taking place concerning the likelihood of Buonaparte's willingness to undertake for Louis XVIII, and for more splendid rewards, the services General Monk had rendered

[1] *Anti-Jacobin Review*, October 1799, p. 241. The article quoted is dated October 26th. It was written in the knowledge that Buonaparte had landed on October 8th.

Charles II, it was not prepared to reject, in advance, all consideration of the peace offers from him that were now universally expected.[1] Such a peace offer to Britain, in the form of a letter from Buonaparte to George III, was sent from Paris on December 25th and must have been under discussion by Ministers during the last days of 1799. Knowing France's financial straits and, perhaps, over-estimating Buonaparte's need to pose as the restorer of peace if he wished to maintain his hold on power, Ministers decided on their chilly reply of January 4, 1800. The new-made First Consul, who had addressed George III directly as a brother Head of State, was not vouchsafed a personal reply; and in the note, that went instead, from Lord Grenville as Foreign Minister to Talleyrand, his French counter-part, strong emphasis was laid on the aggressive and destructive record of Revolutionary France. There followed an unusual passage designed, apparently, to forward a Bourbon restoration by making it almost the condition of immediate negotiation.[2] A second message from France, dated January 14th, contained, indeed, some remonstrance but also the offer of an immediate armistice with peace negotiations to follow at Dunkirk or some other convenient place. On January 20th Grenville replied with observations, scarcely less chilly than those of January 4th, and again directed to convincing France that the British Government and its allies would, after their experiences with the Revolutionaries, only feel safe in treating with a French monarchy.

After such diplomatic exchanges, Opposition was certain to undertake demonstrations in Parliament against Ministers who were charged with having culpably thrown away a splendid opportunity for peace. Other business of the highest importance also faced members when the Session was resumed on January

[1] Cf. *Anti-Jacobin Review*, December 1799, p. 482: "*France.* When we lately adverted to the last Revolution in the government of this devoted country, we observed, that we should be led to consider it in a different point of view from any in which it had hitherto been contemplated by public writers. . . . The difference to which we alluded respects chiefly the *Anti-Jacobinical* and *Royalist* tendency which many of our periodical writers have discovered. . . ."

[2] *Annual Register*, 1800, State Papers, p. 211: "The best and most natural pledge [of changed dispositions in France] . . . would be the restoration of that line of princes which for many centuries maintained the French nation in prosperity at home, and in consideration and respect abroad: such an event would at once have removed, and will at any time remove, all obstacles in the way of negociation for peace . . . But . . . His majesty makes no claim to prescribe to France what shall be the form of her government. . . ." Grenville was doubtless encouraged to take this line by the strong *Chouan* rebellion that had broken out in royalist Brittany.

21st, and most notably the Bill uniting Ireland to Great Britain, and the dangerous bread-situation, produced by the last calamitous harvest. To remember, indeed, that both Houses set up Bread and Corn Committees and that an unusual crop of legislation was the result,[1] is to understand that food rioting, actual or potential, was one of the factors conditioning politics for the rest of the Session. The distress of the poor was specifically invoked when Fox, returning to the House on the plea of his friends, wound up Opposition's criticism of Government's rejection of Buonaparte's peace offer. And here is a passage from the conclusion of Fox's oration of February 3rd:[2]

> Sir, I think you ought to have given a civil, clear, and explicit answer to the overture which was fairly and handsomely made to you. If you were desirous that the negociation should have included all your allies, as the means of bringing about a general peace, you should have told Buonaparte so; but I believe you were afraid of his agreeing to the proposal: you took that method before. Aye, but you say, the people were anxious for peace in 1797. I say they are friends to peace [now]. . . . Believe me, they are friends to peace; although by the laws you have made, restraining the expression of the sense of the people, public opinion cannot now be heard, as loudly and unequivocally as heretofore. But I will not go into the internal state of the country. It is too afflicting to the heart to see the strides which have been made . . . against liberty of every kind . . . I know, sir, that public opinion, if it could be collected, would be as much for peace now, as in 1797.

Though Opposition was defeated by 260 votes against 64, events in the City of London soon lent confirmation to Fox's view that the wish for peace was very wide-spread. The City's ancient municipal machinery gave important facilities for making political demonstrations, unsuppressible by Authority, and these were put to use now that the temporary intoxication, induced by naval victories and Coalition land-successes, was losing its dominion over the great bulk of the City's smaller merchants and shop-keepers. On February 19th Robert Waithman, thirty-six-year-old linen-draper and "Jacobin", succeeded in winning an overwhelming majority in a Common Hall of City Freemen for the

[1] Among the crop of temporary Acts designed to ease the food situation of the poor were those offering bounties upon the import of wheat, oats, rye and rice. Corn and rice exports were also forbidden, some kinds of spirit-making from grain prohibited, and even the sale of fresh bread banned as tempting those able to get it to greater consumption.

[2] Cf. *Annual Register*, 1800, History, pp. 98–9, on this "long, animated and masterly speech".

proposition of petitioning the House of Commons for peace.[1] Opposition was thus provided with further opportunities for attacking Government's alleged mishandling of foreign affairs, and a more dubious appearance could be lent to Government's project of financing Austria and its allies to do the work, on the European continent, which they had failed to do, in 1799, even with the wholehearted assistance of the now antagonised Empire of Russia. Ministers' domestic programme, too, offered Opposition critics plenty of scope. Legislation to renew Habeas Corpus Suspension for a further term was not made the more welcome because accompanied by provision for the continued detention of the unfortunate "Jacobin" suspects arrested in April 1798 and now the object of much popular sympathy.[2] And there was scant enthusiasm for the Act of Union, carried, as it had to be, against the protests of Ireland's best-known "patriots" and besmirched by the special "compensations" for which some of the worst elements in Ireland had been bargaining while martial law silenced their most aggrieved fellow-countrymen.

By the time Ministers were able to wind up the Session on July 29th, a great deal had gone wrong with their plans. Austria had been defeated both in North Italy and in Germany and had signed armistices in both spheres. Ministers possibly hoped that Austrian resolve would be stiffened by the results of a joint naval and military expedition they sent into the Bay of Biscay in August. But neither at Belle Ile nor Ferrol did the British commanders succeed in effecting anything commensurate with the resources that had been put at their disposal. In the Mediterranean there was a success of some moment on September 5th when the French garrison of Malta surrendered after a long siege. But here, too, the ultimate result seemed unfortunate for when the Tsar of Russia failed to obtain the transfer of Malta to himself in his capacity of Grand Master of the Knights of St. John, he began, in

[1] Cf. *Annual Register*, 1800, Chronicle under February 19th: "At a meeting of the mayor, aldermen, and liverymen of the city of London, in common hall assembled, consisting of upwards of 2000 persons, it was resolved by a vast majority, 'That a petition be presented to the hon. the house of commons, upon the present situation of public affairs, praying them to take such measures as they may think proper towards promoting an immediate negotiation with the government of France'. . . ."

[2] Cf. M. W. Patterson, *Sir Francis Burdett and his Times*, Chapter IV, for the importance of Burdett's interest in the Coldbath Fields prisoners. Burdett's interest won him the beginning of the great popular following which was ultimately his.

his semi-lunacy, the extraordinary reversal of policy which seemed to make him the ally of the hitherto-detested Buonaparte. Meanwhile there had been attempts, not, this time frowned upon in Britain, to use the Franco-Austrian armistice to prepare the way for a general Peace Conference. They had virtually broken down already by the time Parliament was reassembled on November 11th.[1] On the one hand, the British Ministers thought they detected in Napoleon's plans for an Anglo-French armistice, conditions which, in a few weeks, would have relieved the French, especially those in Egypt, from the effects of years of naval pressure. And, on the other hand, Buonaparte held that the Austrian armistice, to which he had agreed in the hope of a general pacification, merely kept him from making more valuable conquests on the land than Britain could ever hope to make on the sea. He gave a demonstration of what he meant when he seized Tuscany, appanage of an Austrian Archduke, on October 15th.[2]

It was not primarily on account of the foreign situation, anxious as it was, that Ministers had called Parliament together on November 11th. That date was most inconvenient since it involved assembling the Parliament of Great Britain for a last short Session instead of waiting until the full Parliament of the United Kingdom could be brought together in 1801 under the Act of Union. Yet, as the certainty of a second poor harvest had been raising prices and causing commotion for months, Ministers decided on making some concessions to a popular clamour that had more dangerous possibilities than the new petitioning opportunities it offered the "Jacobins" among the City Freemen and the Middlesex Freeholders.[3] The outcry against "corn-monopolizers", "great

[1] Cf. *Porcupine* (Cobbett's new daily), October 31st: "Four of the five Hamburgh Mails due arrived yesterday; the most important of their intelligence is the recent appointment of the Archduke Charles to be Generalissimo of all the Austrian armies . . . it is incontestible, that little or no progress is made on the part of the Emperor's Ministers for meeting the Congress at Lunéville; but, on the other hand, the Imperialists are pursuing their preparations for actual hostilities. . . ."

[2] *Ibid.*, November 1st, quoting French official claims.

[3] The City Freemen had met in Common Hall on October 3rd and had petitioned the King for a summons of Parliament. The City authorities had not been given a very warm reception at Court when they came, on October 16th, to hand in their petition and were told, in fact, that the King had already determined on summoning Parliament before receiving their petition. The meeting of Middlesex Freeholders, that followed on October 29th, went farther than the City meeting when ascribing the food-position to the war and calling upon their Parliamentary members to "vote against its continuance on every opportunity" *Ibid.*, October 31st).

farmers", millers, bakers, and the London Corn-Market had already produced some dangerous days in mid-September when "inflammatory hand-bills" had brought angry crowds to Mark Lane who, upon being dispersed, had attacked bakers' shops in various quarters of the capital.[1] Ministers apparently suspected the hand of some ex-members of the Corresponding Society in the hand-bills and disorders of September, and their suspicions must have been confirmed by events in London during the days preceding the reopening of Parliament on November 11th. Here is an account from a new pro-Government daily, *The Porcupine*, just founded by William Cobbett:[2]

> The following inflammatory hand-bill was circulated in different parts of the town, . . . on Friday night [November 7th]. It was thrown into the passages of different public-houses, and distributed in the streets.
>
> FAMINE.
>
> Every journeyman artisan, mechanic, tradesman, every manufacturer, labourer, &c. must attend at KENNINGTON COMMON, on Sunday morning next, the 9th inst. to petition the King and Parliament to reduce the price of provisions, and raise their wages, or to furnish them with the means to emigrate to some country where they may be able, by the exercise of their industry, to keep their families from perishing by *famine!!!*
>
> Any attempt to *reason* with such an incendiary as the writer of this curious hand-bill would be labour in vain; or else we might tell him, that let him emigrate to what country he pleases, he would nowhere find it so easy a matter to maintain a family by the fruits of his industry (if indeed he be industrious, which we very much doubt) as in England; for in America, that blessed land of *liberty*, every article of consumption is from 50 to 100 per cent dearer than it is in England. And in France, though meat and bread be sold for less money. . . , yet the difficulty of obtaining money there, owing to its scarcity, is so much greater, that, in fact, these articles are essentially dearer in France than in England. . . .
>
> But of this we are persuaded, the writer of this inflammatory paper is as convinced as we are ourselves; but his object was to collect a mob, by any means whatever. . . . Be that as it may, the vigilance of the Police Magistrates rendered the attempt abortive. They met at an early hour, near the appointed place of rendezvous, and the moment a mob began to form it was dispersed by their officers. . . . We are

[1] Cf. *Annual Register*, 1800, Chronicle under September 14th to September 17th.

[2] *Porcupine*, Monday, November 10th. Cobbett had lately returned from America where, during a residence that lasted from 1792 to 1800, he had developed a pungent pamphleteering style, freely turned against the British Government's critics and enemies.

happy to know, that in consequence of the excellent distribution of the loyal military associations, who were yesterday prepared to act, at a minute's notice, and of the extreme vigilance of the government, every effort of the Jacobins to aid the cause of their republican friends in France . . . will be defeated as soon as made.

When Parliament met on November 11th, most of its attention was inevitably devoted to the scarcity and high price of bread and corn. Once more both Houses set up Committees, and this time the House of Commons Committee issued no fewer than six Reports while, of the two issued by the Lords' Committee, one was regarded as particularly detailed and instructive. On the basis of the Committee inquiries and Reports a good deal of useful temporary legislation was undertaken which, when supplemented by the charities and consumption-economies of the rich and well-to-do, would, it was hoped, tide the poor over their worst troubles.[1] But the poor seem to have felt little of the "gratitude" that was expected of them. According to the *Annual Register*:[2]

They submitted to the use of substitutes, and the practice of economy as to a measure of harsh and peremptory necessity, but felt no kindness towards those who invented the means, or set the example. The laborious and luminous reports of the committees of the two Houses were much less effectual in swaying the minds of the discontented, than the speeches of those, who in opposing or pretending to amend some of the measures, maintained that monopoly did exist, that the scarcity was fictitious, that the dearth was occasioned principally, if not solely by the war, and that all the projects of the committee would not produce so large a saving as would be effected by withholding oats from the horses of the cavalry. That such remarks should not sway the deliberations of either House cannot afford ground for astonishment; but there is no assertion, however untrue, no argument however perverse, which, in times of public distress, will not gain adherents. . . .

A feverish desire for peace was, in some degree, exasperated by the production in parliament of a correspondence between the governments of Great Britain and France . . . and by some motions founded on it;

[1] Cf. *Porcupine*, December 22nd, for the list of Acts passed or passing. They included "An Act to prohibit, until the 1st day of November, 1801, the Exportation of Rice: An Act to authorize His Majesty, from time to time, to prohibit the Exportation of Provisions or Food: An Act to prohibit, until the 1st day of January, 1802, the use of Corn in distilling of Spirits or making of Starch: An Act to permit, until the 1st day of October, 1801, the importation of Herrings and other Fish, the produce of the Fishery carried on in Nova Scotia, Newfoundland, and . . . Labrador . . . without payment of Duty: An Act for granting Bounties on the Importation of Wheat, Barley, Rye, Oats, Peas, Beans, and Indian Corn . . . and Wheaten Flour and Rice."

[2] *Annual Register*, 1801, History, p. 37.

but hostility to government was not displayed in meetings, addresses, petitions, or remonstrances, it was rather negatively exhibited in gloom and sullenness, in tacit disapprobation, and malevolent apathy. Men most attached to government and the country saw abundant grounds for alarm and uneasiness, while those who were hostile to both, or either, seemed to await, with scarcely dissembled satisfaction, the progress of events which would fulfil their forebodings, and gratify their malignity.

There was, of course, a great deal for "malignity" and "foreboding" to occupy themselves with during the winter of 1800–1. The war situation seemed to be going from bad to worse as news came, first, of Buonaparte's termination of the armistice with Austria, then, of the decisive French victory of Hohenlinden (December 3rd), and, finally, of the Austrian resolve to negotiate a separate peace at Lunéville. And what gave "foreboding" the better apparent justification was the new League of Armed Neutrality forming, under the Tsar, to challenge Britain's naval methods with neutrals and apparently certain, sooner or later, to come to an armed clash with the Royal Navy.[1] Even the official British resolve, taken in conjunction with the Sultan, to turn part of Britain's military strength upon the dispirited French garrisons of Egypt became a theme for Opposition criticism. When the first Parliament of the United Kingdom began business in February 1801, the British Army's record was thus treated, for the Opposition, by Grey:[2] "A force collected to defend the British shores, had been dissipated and destroyed in the prosecution of disgraceful expeditions; part had been wasted in the fatal descent upon Holland; part had mouldered away in the holds of transports; and the rest, after being driven about from Portsmouth to Belleisle, from Belleisle to Ferrol, from Ferrol to Cadiz, are, at last of all, to perish in the burning sands of Egypt. Whenever this subject should be brought under discussion, he would pledge himself to prove, that to the bad faith and impolicy of ministers alone, the French were indebted for the possession of that country, which they would else have evacuated."

Next day, February 3rd, Opposition members raised the matter

[1] The bitterly hostile Tsar had already laid an embargo on all British ships in his ports, appointed a Board of Commissioners to manage British property, and proceeded to the final step of sending British captains and crews as prisoners into the interior. And both he and Buonaparte were urging Sweden and Denmark-Norway, full associates in the Armed Neutrality, and Prussia, part-associate, to copy his methods of "reprisal".

[2] *Annual Register*, 1801, History, p. 55.

of the rumours, already circulating, of an alleged split in the Cabinet on the Catholic Question. They do not yet seem to have been aware of the full gravity of the crisis though there was some eagerness to make the party point that, if the Catholics were refused Emancipation, it would be a denial of the expectation under which Catholic support had been won for the Act of Union. A week of excited political rumour followed in which it seemed to become ever more clearly established that the King had accepted the resignation of Pitt and his principal colleagues rather than accord Catholic Emancipation and some State provision for the Irish Catholic clergy. In view of the special danger of the times, the capacity of those who were reported to have been picked upon to succeed Pitt and his colleagues was under early criticism. It must have raised hope high in Paris to find Addington, Hawkesbury and the rest treated, by some, from the very first, as a mere "ludicrous" simulacrum of a Government.[1] And hope could not have declined when it transpired that the King's effort to put his Cabinet of mediocrities into power had temporarily cost him his reason so that the new Prime Minister, for example, could not be confirmed in office until March 17th. Even then, the King's sanity was far from fully restored and those in the confidence of the Court knew that, for months to come, a Regency, in the hands of the Prince of Wales, was an ugly possibility.[2]

The very plight of the King and his chosen Prime Minister, however, contributed to their salvation. Pitt seems to have been sincerely affected by the insanity which his pressure upon the King had brought. He not only promised to avoid such pressure for the rest of the King's life-time but undertook to give Addington every possible support. And the promise was kept honourably enough for a very considerable time. Pitt, for example, took the main financial business of the Session upon himself during the anxious weeks that preceded Addington's formal appointment; he persuaded a number of his political associates, including his

[1] Cf. *Annual Register*, 1801, History, p. 66, for the speeches of Lords Darnley and Fife in the House of Lords on February 10th. According to the former "something poor and mean in intellect and consequence was to be substituted" for a Ministry that was "great". According to the latter, "evil advice has got round the throne, and changes of the most alarming nature have of consequence taken place; if it is a trick, nothing could have been so wickedly advised; if it is real, nothing more ludicrous. . . ."

[2] Cf. J. H. Jesse, *Memoirs of the Life and Reign of George III*, iii, 241–79, for an exhaustive treatment of George III's mental and physical condition during the first half of 1801.

brother, the Earl of Chatham, to accept office under Addington; and, finally, he seated himself, as a private member, on the Government Benches behind his successor.[1] All this may have been done in the expectation that Addington would prove little but a caretaker for him but, none the less, it helped Addington mightily over his first difficult months. Opposition, too, in continuing to direct its principal attacks on the war-record of the Pitt Government, possibly helped Addington also. When Fox reappeared in Parliament on March 25th, it was to devote the major part of his speech to a most biting examination of the management of peace and war by Pitt and his principal ally, Dundas. Considerably less attention was devoted to the new Ministers, of whom Fox remarked that they could not be worse than the Government they succeeded "for worse could not be". Even when courageously trying to prepare the ground for a new peace negotiation, Fox could not forbear from plunging, anew, into mordant criticisms of Pitt's Foreign Secretary, Grenville, and glowing praises of Buonaparte. If Fox still had some hopes of being entrusted with the negotiation of an Anglo-French pacification, loud public praise of the "forbearance, magnanimity, and clemency," which Buonaparte was held to have shown to Austria in the Treaty of Lunéville, was not the most politic thing for him to undertake. It was not Fox, but the apparently "safer" Addington, who eventually gained from the British public's desire, later in the year, for a new peace negotiation to be set on foot.

The fact that Scarcity Committees were again active during the Session points to one of the anxieties that the new Ministers inherited from the old. And other anxieties were evidenced by their appeal for the renewal of the Irish Martial Law Acts and the Act suspending Habeas Corpus in Ireland.[2] A number of Opposition members fought both Bills with great determination and refused to be impressed by alarmist "information" furnished by Government. Meanwhile Ministers, who had opened their career in England, by a conciliatory liberation of the "State prisoners" detained under Habeas Corpus Suspension,[3] professed to have

[1] Cf. J. H. Jesse, *Memoirs of the Life and Reign of George III*, iii, 293.

[2] As United Kingdom Bills they count as the 41 Geo. III, caps. 14 and 15.

[3] Cf. *Annual Register*, 1801, Chronicle under March 4th: "The State prisoners, confined in the tower, the house of correction in Coldbath-fields, Tothill-fields bridewell, Shrewsbury, and other county gaols, were brought up to the Duke of Portland's office, when most of them were liberated on their own recognizance. Among these were Lord Cloncurry, Mr. Bonham,

acquired speedy proof of the necessity for renewing Habeas Corpus Suspension in Britain and adding a fresh Seditious Meetings Bill, to boot. The justificatory material, put before Committees of Secrecy in both Lords and Commons, must have been the work of the most unscrupulous informers, and, even so, the Committees can hardly be acquitted of the charge of eagerly swallowing the most improbable "information" provided it was sufficiently alarmist. And if the Report presented to the House of Lords on April 27th was extraordinary enough in its credulity, the long Report presented in the Commons on May 15th was, in some respects, more extraordinary still. It professed to tell the story of treasonable organisation in London, the provinces and Ireland and even when at its most restrained is a lurid example of what "seditious" tavern-talk, "reported" by police-spies and interpreted by alarmists, has a habit of becoming.

It might, perhaps, be well to end this chapter with a picture of working-class London as represented in the pages of the *Secrecy Reports* of 1801. The picture drawn was intended to depict the activities of the "seditious" part of the working-classes between the date of the issue of the *Secrecy Reports* of 1799 and the alleged appearance, in 1801, of a new operative "Levelling" enthusiasm, evoked, it was suggested, by the primitive Agrarian Communism advocated in Thomas Spence's pamphlets. The steady fanaticism of this street-peddler of his own writings had, doubtless, made some impression throughout the Tottenham Court Road district where he lived. And, probably, the fact that he had been several times arrested by Government made more.[1] But that a Secrecy

&c. One or two refractory persons refusing to enter any bail, and insisting on unconditional release, were remanded. Those brought from the country were allowed five pounds each to defray the expences of their journey home, and all were treated with the utmost civility and attention. Colonel Despard, Galloway, Lemaitre, and Hodgson, who refused to enter into recognizance, were committed to Tothill-fields. The liberation was intirely voluntary on the part of government, as the act for suspending the habeas corpus had not expired. . . ."

[1] Cf. *Morning Chronicle*, January 3, 1795, for a letter written by Spence to that paper asking the "Friends of Freedom and Political Truth" to help the sale of his publication, *Pig's Meat*, in view of a seven months' imprisonment from which he had just been released and his previous sacrifices in the popular cause. Of these Spence said: "That I have been a considerable sufferer in the Cause of Liberty, is evident from the following facts: since the prosecutions began in 1792, I have been four times dragged from my business by runners and messengers. Three times have I been indicted before Grand Juries, and twice have they found true bills. Thrice have I been lodged in prison for different periods of time, and once have I been put to the bar, but never once convicted. Neither did my son (a boy twelve years of age) escape prison, for

Committee should treat this penniless and eccentric unfortunate as a possible menace to the State is a measure of the unbalanced nature of the Committee's findings.[1] The Committee shall, however, speak for itself.[2]

"It was not to be expected," declared the Committee when explaining why disaffection survived the penal legislation of 1799, "that persons who had deeply imbibed the principles of the French Revolution; who were inflamed with the most sanguinary animosity against all the existing establishments of Church and State; that such of them, particularly of the lower orders of society, whose hopes were instigated by the prospect of the plunder of the rich, and the partition of the landed property of the country . . . should be induced by any change of circumstances or legal coercion, suddenly to abandon those principles, and to return to the duties of loyal and peaceable subjects; It accordingly appears manifest, that, though the exertions of the disaffected . . . were suppressed by the vigilance of government . . . and by the fear of detection . . . yet their disposition remained unaltered; that from the month of May 1799, notwithstanding the detention of several of the most active members of the late Corresponding Society, others have continued occasionally to meet. . . . A principal object at first was the collection of money for the relief of the persons confined. . . . On the 5th of November 1799, when they began to derive fresh encouragement from the unfavourable events on the Continent, and the evacuation of Holland by the British troops, a party of them assembled to celebrate the anniversary of *Hardy's* acquittal; on which occasion they appear first to have ventured on a more open avowal of their opinions, and to have indulged in the most treasonable and seditious toasts and songs. As yet, however, the mischief went no farther; and, indeed, . . . some of them supposed no favourable opportunity would occur till the restoration of peace should, as they hoped, have at once removed the legal restraints, which now impeded their operations, and brought home such an addition of unemployed hands as would increase the existing scarcity, and add to the prevailing discontents. . . . The successes of the enemy in the last campaign, the disappointments of our allies, still more of any enterprize in which this country was more particularly concerned, or any danger which threatened the life or health of their Sovereign, were, as they occurred, a constant source of

selling in the street, *The Rights of Man*, in verse (price only one halfpenny) the poems which he had were confiscated and I paid a fine, and thus the mighty affair ended. . . ." There is a similar appeal in the *Morning Post* of December 18, 1794, and, by 1801, he could claim a further short imprisonment under the Habeas Corpus Suspension of 1798.

[1] Cf. *The Important Trial of Thomas Spence . . . on May 27th 1801* for some incidental admission by Spence that "except by a thinking few [I] am looked on as a lunatic".

[2] From the *Second Report of the Committee* [of Secrecy, 1801] *to the House of Commons*. Presented May 15th.

satisfaction, and of renewed hope and expectation.... The dearth of provisions early in the last year, opened a new field....

"It was not, however, till the commencement of the present year, that a settled or combined plan of operations seems to have been carried on... a new association began to be formed... clubs were formed under the disguise of benefit societies... private and individual assassination unquestionably was among the measures proposed at several meetings, as fit to precede or accompany the general rising....

"Near the same time, principles of a similar nature were studiously promulgated in a society of another description, and disguised by pretexts of a different nature.... The topics they proposed for discussion, and recommended for adoption, were stated to be contained in a pamphlet published by one Spence, from whom that society had assumed the title of Spensonians... the principal object of the writer is to recommend the complete extermination of Royalty, Nobility, and Property, for the purpose of an equal parochial division of the profits of lands, as the basis of a 'beautiful and powerful new Republic'... this was to be effected by a general insurrection of the people, for which the revolutionary outrages in France, and the mutiny in our own fleet, were held out as laudable examples."

CHAPTER IX

AMIENS, BEFORE AND AFTER

"Buonaparte, of a small, and by no means commanding figure, dressed plainly, though richly, in the embroidered consular coat, without powder in his hair, looked like a private gentleman, indifferent as to dress, and devoid of all haughtiness in his air. . . . The moment the circle was formed, Buonaparte began with the Spanish Ambassador, then went to the American, with whom he spoke for some time, and so on, performing his part with ease, and very agreeably; until he came to the English Ambassador, who, after the presentation of some English Noblemen, announced to him Mr. Fox! He was a good deal flurried, and after indicating considerable emotion, very rapidly said, 'Ah! Mr. Fox! I have heard with pleasure of your arrival—I have desired much to see you—I have long admired in you the orator, and friend of his country, who in constantly raising his voice for peace, consulted that country's best interests—those of Europe—and of the human race. The two great nations of Europe require peace;—they have nothing to fear; they ought to understand and value one another. In you, Mr. Fox, I see with much satisfaction, that great statesman who recommended Peace, because there was no just object of war; who saw Europe desolated to no purpose, and who struggled for its relief.'"

J. B. Trotter's *Memoirs of the Later Years of the Rt. Hon. C. J. Fox* describes the First Consul's *levée* of September 3, 1802.

"During the whole course of the negotiations which led to the preliminary and definitive treaties of peace . . . it was his majesty's sincere desire, not only to put an end to the hostilities . . . but to adopt such measures . . . as might most effectually contribute to consolidate the general tranquillity of Europe. . . . But his majesty has unfortunately had too much reason to observe, and to lament, that the system of violence, aggression, and aggrandisement, which characterised . . . the different governments of France during the war, has been continued with as little disguise since its termination. They have continued to keep a French army in Holland. . . . They have, in a period of peace, invaded the territory . . . of the Swiss nation, in defiance of the treaty of Luneville. . . . They have annexed to the dominions of France, Piedmont, Parma, and Placentia, and the island of Elba. . . .

"It was about this time [October 1802] that the French government first distinctly advanced the principle, that his majesty had no right to complain of the conduct or to interfere with the proceedings of France, on any point which did not form a part . . . of the treaty of Amiens. . . . The treaty of Amiens, and every other treaty, in providing for the objects to which it is particularly directed, does not therefore assume or imply an indifference to all other objects; much less does it adjudge them to be of a nature to be left to the caprice of the violent and the powerful. . . .

"Whilst his majesty was actuated by these sentiments, he was called upon by the French government to evacuate the island of Malta. . . ."

From the British official *Declaration* of May 1803.

THE Addington Government had great good fortune in the character of the war-news that came in during the first months of its existence. It reaped, to begin with, the benefits of the remarkable success that attended the operations of the powerful armament, collected by the Pitt Government, to bring the Armed Neutrality to "reason". As Englishmen read of their fleet's successful defiance of Danish and Swedish batteries at the Baltic entrances, late in March, and the combined daring and chivalry of the operations against Copenhagen, early in April, which brought Denmark to seek an armistice, there was a remarkable revival of national self-satisfaction. There followed, almost immediately, the animating, if not wholly unexpected intelligence, that the crazy Tsar Paul had been put to death by his own courtiers,[1] and that his successor, Alexander, was most anxious to negotiate with Britain rather than fight Nelson and profit Buonaparte. And as early as May 1st there was already news in England that the British military forces in the Mediterranean, so largely wasted when turned against Cadiz in the autumn of 1800, had now been successfully disembarked in Egypt and had won an important victory, against the French, in their very first engagement.[2] The intelligence from Egypt became even better as the months proceeded and it grew clear that the French would be totally expelled. The Speech from the Throne, read at the close of the Parliamentary Session on July 2nd, must have made it plain to Buonaparte that, even the new Ministers, anxious though they were to signalize themselves by restoring peace to Britain, were not to be cajoled or frightened out of all their conquests while he retained his own.[3]

[1] Cf. *The Observer*, December 14, 1800, for a curious anticipation of what happened at St. Petersburg in the night of March 23, 1801: "A report was yesterday in circulation that the Russian Noblesse, disapproving the conduct of their Sovereign, had confined him, and liberated the subjects and the shipping of England. . . . The Emperor Paul is not much more popular in Russia than in England. His capital, long the scene of suspicion, is become the seat of danger and apprehension. 'Tis, however, a subject not to be at present dwelt upon."

[2] Cf. *Farington Diary*, i, 307, under May 1st: "C. Offley brought information from the City that a dispatch from Constantinople had been received at the India House, giving an account of a victory obtained by Sir Ralph Abercrombie over General Menours Army in Egypt."

[3] Cf. *Annual Register*, 1801, State Papers, p. 257, for this extract: "The brilliant and repeated successes of his Majesty's arms by sea and land . . . derive, at the present moment, peculiar value in his Majesty's estimation, from their tendency to facilitate . . . the restoration of peace on fair and adequate terms. They furnish at the same time an additional pledge, that if the sentiments of moderation and justice . . . should be rendered unavailing . . . by

Indeed, the pusillanimous Government of Spain itself, given some confidence by the British victories, ventured to cross Buonaparte's plans for marching a French army into the territories of Britain's Portuguese allies. It was Buonaparte's professed desire to make play at a Peace Conference with an offer of evacuating Portugal in return for an evacuation by Britain of all conquered colonial territories. But though he was thus promising Spain the recovery, not only of Minorca, but of Trinidad as well, the Spanish Government, after dutifully declaring war on Portugal, saw reason for making a hurried peace in a fashion that deprived the French Army of Portugal of most of those opportunities for treachery and violence enjoyed by its successor in 1808.

The British diplomatic position was further improved by almost every event of the summer. On June 17th, for example, was signed a treaty at St. Petersburg dissolving the Armed Neutrality; in mid-August it already seemed certain that England would enjoy, perhaps, the most abundant harvest ever known;[1] and in September news arrived in France of the capitulation of the last French forces in Egypt. This last piece of intelligence was decisive and Buonaparte, who had been demanding impossible conditions, sent forward the orders, which allowed his representative Otto to sign the Peace Preliminaries of October 1st with Addington's Foreign Secretary, Lord Hawkesbury. The terms were a good deal more favourable to Buonaparte than would probably have been conceded by Grenville, Foreign Secretary in the Pitt Government. But the British public, dreaming of long years of peace to come, had little fault to find, while the mob waxed so enthusiastic that a strange demonstration was undertaken when, on October 10th, Buonaparte's aide-de-camp arrived with the ratification. General Lauriston's carriage, it is related, was "followed by a numerous concourse of people, who afterwards took the horses from his carriage, and drew it down Bond-street, St. James's-street, and to Downing-street, expressing on the occasion the most tumultuous joy". At night there was "a general illumination", abstainers from which had their windows

unreasonable pretensions on the part of his enemies, the spirit and firmness of his people will continue to be manifested by such efforts and sacrifices as may be necessary. . . ."

[1] Cf. *Farington Diary*, under August 14th and September 7th, for "the Harvest being abundant & excellent", though there was public doubt whether prices would fall proportionately owing to the machinations of "great farmers", "monopolists" and "speculators".

broken by the mob. The illumination was repeated on October 12th.[1]

Having brought an exhausting war to a not undignified conclusion, the Addington Government might now hope to have established an independent basis for its existence. That hope was largely justified by events, though the nature of the terms Ministers accepted, first, in the Peace Preliminaries, and, ultimately, in the final negotiations at Amiens, underwent some very critical examination during the Parliamentary Session, begun on October 29, 1801. It is, indeed, no exaggeration to say that, despite the "popularity" of the peace with a war-weary people, and the large majorities obtained for it in Parliament, critics of its terms, justified as they increasingly were by Buonaparte's own aggressions, succeeded in provoking the leading debates of a Session not ended until June 28, 1802. It might be well to concentrate attention, here, on the November debates on the Preliminaries and the May debates on the definitive Treaty. On November 3rd, Grenville, ex-Foreign Secretary, delivered, in the Lords, a weighty attack on the many unreciprocated concessions made by Ministers in order to obtain peace, and the same case was made by others of the "Grenville party" in the Commons.[2] And the "Grenville" critics were, perhaps, more Parliamentarily dangerous when descanting upon "our abandonment" of the Prince of Orange, the King of Sardinia and "our ancient ally", Portugal, than when demonstrating the unwisdom of Britain's having undertaken to restore, without reciprocation, great colonial territories to France, Holland and Spain and to evacuate Malta and Egypt, to boot. But it was in the May debates on the definitive Treaty of Amiens that the "Grenvilles" and their ally, Windham, must have wounded Ministers most. Not only were minor omissions pointed to in the Treaty, capable, it was alleged, of causing an infinity of trouble in India, South America, the Cape and Malta, but the whole basis of Ministers' assumptions, when conceding Buonaparte the Preliminaries, was held to have been destroyed since. Had not Buonaparte already given proof of the most disturbing European ambitions when having himself elected President of the Italian

[1] Cf. *Annual Register*, 1801, Chronicle under October 10th and 12th.

[2] The speakers in the Commons on November 3rd were Grenville's diplomat-brother, Thomas, and his nephew, Earl Temple. Windham, another ex-Cabinet Minister of the Pitt Government, had already announced hostility on October 29th.

Republic and of even more disturbing colonial ambitions when compelling Spain to make over Louisiana to him, and Portugal to submit to some shearing of Brazil in the interests of French Guiana?[1]

Against these annoying and damaging attacks, venomously re-echoed in the Press by Cobbett, Ministers obtained at least as much help from Fox and "the old Opposition" as from Pitt. Pitt, whose aid, it was believed, had been sedulously sought, took the line that Government's peace was as good as could be obtained by Britain's own exertions when the Continent could not or would not do its part. Fox gave the peace his warmest blessing, praised the sensible "moderation" of Ministers in negotiating and presenting it, and forgot not to contrast this praiseworthy "moderation" with the headstrong persistence the Pitt Government had shown in throwing away repeated opportunities for negotiating peace on far better terms than were now available.[2] Similar praise was accorded to Ministers' main financial project of the Session, the abolition, now that the war was over, of Pitt's Income Tax while their resolve to allow Habeas Corpus Suspension to run out was hailed as a "restoration of the Constitution". And when Parliament was dissolved on June 29th, "the old Opposition" professed to find new reasons for congratulating the country on the fact that the Pitt Government was no more. According to the over-enthusiastic account of the Foxites' *New Annual Register*:[3]

> The general election exhibited the new and extraordinary spectacle of a BRITISH MINISTER NOT INTERFERING WITH THE FREE CHOICE OF THE ELECTORS. In almost every place, therefore, where the election was popular, the event proved fatal to the members of the late administration and their devoted adherents. Mr. Windham lost the election for Norwich, and Mr. Mainwaring was thrown out of the representation of Middlesex . . . though his opponent Sir F. Burdett. was only less unpopular than the man, who had obstinately supported all the bad measures of the former ministry. A larger proportion of new members,

[1] Cf. *New Annual Register*, 1802, Chapters 1 and 8.

[2] Fox's views are to be found in his speeches of November 3, 1801 and May 7, 1802.

[3] *New Annual Register*, 1802, History, p. 333. Though the facts hardly warranted this Foxite estimate, there were anti-Jacobin alarmists, prepared to take a similar view (Cf. *Thoughts on the late General Election as demonstrative of the Progress of Jacobism* by the very Tory barrister, John Bowles). It will be noticed that Sir Francis Burdett's brand of demagogy was disliked by some Foxites. [History, as above, will be much used for British and Foreign History.]

and particularly of men of independent principles, were returned than on any late occasion of the kind; and friends of liberty, wherever they presented themselves, were generally received by the acclamations, and supported by the suffrages of the people.

As soon as his re-election was secure, Fox, as is well known, joined the flood of British travellers who descended upon France, anxious to see for themselves the changes that the Revolution had brought. Fox had private reasons for visiting Paris but undoubtedly he also looked upon himself as one likely, sooner or later, to have charge of British foreign policy.[1] Buonaparte, too, had reason to know that, even as an Opposition leader, Fox could be of the greatest use to him. Yet, despite the personal attention and flattery bestowed upon the British statesman, Buonaparte hardly made Fox's chosen task of Anglo-French appeasement a light one. For the First Consul to undertake, in September, the annexation of Piedmont to France and, in October, the military occupation of Switzerland, was to add powerfully to the mingled suspicion and dislike with which he was already viewed by the most typical British "public opinion", resentful alike of previous violence and dictation beyond France's frontiers and the shoddy dynasty he was plainly preparing to set up within.[2] When the French general, Andréossi, arrived, early in November, as the First Consul's ambassador there was no enthusiasm but only a strange and almost morbid curiosity.[3] Even before the newly-elected Parliament assembled on November 16th, it was very obvious that the Session would be a critical one, with the Ministers under much stronger pressure from "the Grenvilles", and Fox in a much more disadvantageous position for persuading them to take no step that might bring war nearer.

Before Parliamentary business proper began with the King's Speech of November 23rd, there was one tremendous sensation when the Ministers brought to light the desperate conspiracy of Colonel Despard, an ex-officer whose treatment by Government had gradually converted him into the most dangerous "Jacobin"

[1] Cf. *Memorials and Correspondence of C. J. Fox*, iv, 451, for his private business: "We are . . . going abroad soon, chiefly on account of some state papers which are at Paris, and which it is necessary for me, with a view to my History [of James II], to inspect carefully. . . ."

[2] Not content with the Consulate for ten years, as agreed upon only in May 1802, Buonaparte arranged, in August, the bestowal upon himself of the Consulate for life.

[3] Cf. *New Annual Register*, 1802, Principal Occurrences, pp. 69–71.

in London.[1] Detained, between 1798 and 1802, under Habeas Corpus Suspension, Despard had, soon after his release, commenced plotting once more, and whether in touch with France or not, had begun secret recruiting among the capital's most disaffected elements for a bold throw against the King, in person, when on his way to Parliament on November 23rd. Despard had been anxious to bring discontented soldiers into his movement, and it was one of these who had ultimately supplied the information which led to his arrest, with twenty-nine others, in a Lambeth public-house on November 16th when swearing-in for the plot was actually proceeding.[2] The newspapers soon had striking "information" for the public.

"We understand," it was reported,[3] "that it was the object of the conspirators to make an attempt upon the life of his majesty, on his way to the parliament house, on Tuesday. In this horrid undertaking, they were to be joined by 2000 of the poor of Spitalfields, and about the same number from St. George's-fields, &c. amounting in the whole to 10,000 men. The attempt on his majesty was only intended as the first scene in the frightful tragedy; and, it is said, that having succeeded in that, it was their farther plan to seize the tower, where having armed themselves, they meant to return and take possession of the bank. From thence they were to proceed to Buckingham-house, and seize the rest of the royal family resident there. These latter circumstances have been mentioned by the soldier, who gave the information.... This business is likely to engross the whole attention of government for some days.... It is expected that a special commission will be immediately issued for the trial of the offenders.... Colonel Despard, on his arrest, made no resistance.... It is almost unnecessary to add, that he is the colonel Despard who was so long confined in Coldbath-fields prison...."

It is no place here to refer to Despard's trial on February 7, 1803 or to his execution, together with six followers, a fortnight

[1] See *Dictionary of National Biography*, under Edward Marcus Despard for the Colonel's military career. He had refused anything but unconditional release, when the Addington Government came into office, and had undergone further detention.

[2] Cf. *The Trial of Edward Marcus Despard Esquire for High Treason*, pp. 258–9 (from the summing-up): "An officer, heretofore, of considerable rank ... is found in daily conversation with soldiers of the lowest class, at public houses of the meanest resort, in company with the commonest workmen and labourers.... What, it may be asked, led him to the Flying Horse at Newington? What to the Oakley Arms? What to Tower Hill? What to the Coach and Horses at Whitechapel? ..."

[3] From *New Annual Register*, 1802, Principal Occurrences under November 18th. The newspapers of that day seem to have been used for this report.

later.[1] But it is worth noting that the course of the Parliamentary Session was considerably affected by the further praiseworthy "moderation" that Fox and the "old Opposition" declared they found in Addington's handling of the Despard conspiracy. That no new Suspension of Habeas Corpus was asked for and no new coercive Statute drafted became, according to them, two reasons the more for supporting Addington sufficiently to encourage him to stand up against the anti-Buonaparte clamour of "the Grenvilles" on the one hand, and the temptation to hand over the Treasury to Pitt, on the other. When the Foxites' *New Annual Register* for 1802 was being prepared at the end of that year, it was thought fit to point the contrast between Ministers and ex-Ministers very sharply.

"Under the administration of Mr. Pitt," declared the *New Annual Register*,[2] "... we were condemned, conquered, deserted abroad; we were divided and distracted at home. He had a kind of dexterity in creating discord; and like another Cadmus, could raise up factions where there would have been none. What has since followed may serve to convince us that he was utterly unacquainted with the character, the temper, the spirit of the nation he was appointed to govern. We have since seen the people pacified, conciliated, moved with the facility of children, by a set of men new in office, without influence or connexions, with nothing but character and some knowledge of the English temper to support them. What is the charm with which they have subdued sedition, and united every party? A little condescension, a proper share of moderation, a conformity to the constitution, and some attention to the spirit of the people whose affairs they were appointed to conduct. To those who are dazzled by the splendour of eloquence, or seduced by the music of words, we leave the pleasing delusion of gazing in profound but stupid admiration of Mr. Pitt, but such will never be the sentiment of the well-informed. . . ."

This was all very well, but, none the less, it ignored the fact that

[1] *New Annual Register*, 1803, Principal Occurrences, p. 39, gives the following details about those executed with Despard: "Macnamara was 50 years of age. He was born in Ireland; by trade a carpenter. Wood, 26 years of age, born in Derbyshire; a soldier. Francis, 23 years of age, born in Shropshire; a soldier and shoemaker. Broughton, 26 years of age, born in London; a carpenter. Graham, 53 years of age, born in London; a slater. Wratten, 35 years of age . . . a shoemaker."

[2] Cf. *Ibid.*, 1802, History, p. 5. The anti-Pitt animus of this publication is illustrated by such another passage as this: "When Mr. Pitt vacated his official situation, his principal solicitude was to exclude Mr. Fox and his party from his majesty's confidence, for their admission would have been a death-blow to all his hopes; and to this object there is scarce any sacrifice which he would not have made."

the Addington "moderates" themselves were increasingly uneasy about the ever-expanding ambitions manifested by Buonaparte since he had obtained their signature to the Peace Preliminaries of October 1801. Into the Speech from the Throne, delivered on November 23, 1802, they determined to insert what was, despite its "moderate" language, a grave passage implying that large armed forces would have to be maintained and that Britain could not look on indefinitely while the First Consul changed the map of Europe to his advantage.[1] "The Grenvilles", now sometimes called the "new Opposition", complained bitterly nevertheless of the lethargy and folly Ministers had shown, first, in the peace negotiations and, then, in allowing France to annex Piedmont and redistribute Germany without let or hindrance. And if Ministers had, at last, taken the alarm from what was happening in Switzerland, they had, it was declared, done so too late to receive the support from Russia and Austria that would have been forthcoming earlier and had, moreover, largely tied their own hands by having agreed to surrender all conceivable manner of strong points. It was a mere accident that the Cape was still under British control while Malta itself was only in British hands because Ministers had committed the fortunate "blunder" of agreeing to completely inexecutable Treaty clauses with regard to its evacuation. The country could expect no safety from such a Government, and according to Grenville, every eye was already directed to the only man who could rally the nation and weather the storm.[2]

Faced by what he undoubtedly regarded as the "danger" of Pitt's prompt return to power, surrounded by a war-party, Fox maintained both the advantages the peace had brought and the perils of departing from it. It was Pitt's war, according to Fox, that had made France so powerful and so unamiable, and now it was better to ground a hope for peace in Frenchmen's obvious desire to restore their commerce and manufactures than to plunge into another war, with no more help than might be obtained from

[1] Cf. *Ibid.*, State Papers, p. 97: "In my intercourse with foreign powers I have been actuated by a sincere disposition for the maintenance of peace; it is nevertheless impossible for me to lose sight of that established and wise system of policy by which the interests of other states are connected with our own; and I cannot, therefore, be indifferent to any material change in their relative condition and strength. . . . You will, I am persuaded, agree with me in thinking that it is incumbent upon us to adopt those means of security which are best calculated to afford the prospect of preserving to my subjects the blessings of Peace. . . ."

[2] *Ibid.*, 1803, History, pp. 11–14.

a few subsidized German princes. With special vigour, Fox denied that there existed a "popular" demand for war. As one summary of his speech had it:[1]

> A great deal had been said about the disposition of the people of this country in favour of a renewal of the war. This he had no hesitation in affirming to be completely false. The origin of this calumny it was not difficult to trace. It arose, he affirmed, from the coalition of some newspapers, which affected to hold out this as the real disposition of the people. Their motives for such representations might be various. They might wish to gratify spleen, or to increase their circulation by contriving to excite the curiosity of their readers; but if the publishers of newspapers were to be the means of plunging the nation again into a destructive contest, it would be the most base and ignoble cause in which a people was ever engaged. But we were told, that a most considerable interest in this country [the commercial interest] were strongly actuated with a desire that the war should be renewed. To this representation he was not disposed to give his assent. . . . When there was not a single power ready to second our efforts, let us not, continued Mr. Fox, by a rash step forfeit those blessings . . . of peace. . . . We were now in a state of domestic tranquillity, of flattering internal prosperity; and our commerce . . . might become daily more extended. . . .

But Fox—and Peace—were obviously on the defensive already and were to be still more so in December, when the Army and Navy Estimates were taken at a time that saw Holland, Switzerland and Italy justifiably counted as so dominated by France that their "independence" had become no more than a sorry jest of the First Consul's. Fox did not oppose a largely increased provision for naval defence but he objected to the big army augmentations proposed as tending to weaken Britain's financial reserves for a war which he did not regard as probable for some time to come. Even such a usual collaborator with Fox as Sheridan rose to dissent, and it is doubtful whether Fox himself would have made his points, financial and constitutional, had he fully known Ministers' difficulties with a First Consul who, while executing a series of lawless coups beyond his frontiers, complained furiously that Britain should hesitate about evacuating Malta or British Ministers deny their constitutional competence to suppress newspaper criticism of himself.[2] Possibly Ministers were too "discreet"

[1] *New Annual Register*, 1803, History, pp. 18–19.

[2] Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 256: "Towards the latter end of July, 1802, the French ambassador, M. Otto, received an order from his government to demand

in their handling of Buonaparte, for on these and other questions they could easily have obtained a full-throated roar from the "public" that might early have convinced the First Consul that there was no craven fear of him in Britain. Even Fox, for example, ready, doubtless, to bear with equanimity the intelligence that the First Consul was pressing for the expulsion of the Bourbon princes, would have felt outraged to learn that such expulsion was but one of a list of six demands, made up as follows:[1]

1. That his majesty's government would adopt the most effectual measures to put a stop to the unbecoming and seditious publications with which the newspapers and other writings printed in England were filled;
2. That the individuals mentioned in his [M. Otto's] letter of the 23rd of July [1802] should be sent out of the island of Jersey.
3. That the former bishops of Arras and St. Pol de Leon, and all those who, like them, under the pretext of religion, sought to raise disturbances, in the interior of France, should likewise be sent away;
4. That *Georges* and his adherents should be transported to Canada according to the intention notified to the French government. . . .
5. That in order to deprive the evil-disposed of every pretext for disturbing the good understanding between the two governments, it should be recommended to the princes of the house of Bourbon, at present in Great Britain, to repair to Warsaw, the residence of the head of their family.
6. That such of the French emigrants as still thought proper to wear the orders and decorations belonging to the ancient government of France, should be required to quit the territory of the British empire.

To remember that Government must have been aware, by the end of the year, of the tricky perfidy shown by the First Consul in contriving the unauthorised introduction into Britain of military observers as "commercial commissioners" is to gauge still farther

the punishment of M. Peltier, editor of a periodical paper in the French language. . . . It was declared that it was not to Peltier alone, but to the editor of the *Courier Français de Londres*, to Cobbett and to other writers who resembled them, that he had to direct the attention of his majesty's government. . . ."

[1] Cf. C. D. Yonge, *Life of Lord Liverpool*, i, 81–4, for the direct tone even Hawkesbury, Addington's Foreign Secretary, felt compelled to take in the official secrecy of his reply: "the king neither *would* nor *could*, in consequence of any representation or menace from a foreign Power, make any concession which could be in the smallest degree dangerous to the liberty of the press, justly dear to every British subject . . . the practice of presenting such notes could not fail to have the effect of indisposing the two nations to each other . . . the French Government must have formed a most erroneous judgement of the disposition of the British nation. . . ."

the degree of long-suffering attempted by the Addington Administration.[1]

All the "discretion" shown by Ministers, however, in keeping from the public the insulting suggestions and activities of the First Consul, was destined to be wasted. Towards the end of January, Buonaparte, who occasionally conducted a paper war of his own in the pages of the *Moniteur*, chose to have printed there a report on Egypt, sent in by Colonel Sebastiani, another of his "commercial observers". Among other things, the report insulted the British troops still in Egypt and asserted the ease with which a French reconquest might be effected.[2] British Ministers could hardly be blamed for connecting the Sebastiani report with the strong pressure that began, almost at the same time, for the British evacuation of Malta, Buonaparte's own stepping-stone towards Egypt in 1798. Ministers' resolve to refuse the evacuation of Malta, at least for the time, was confirmed rather than weakened by the odd mixture of hypocrisy and threats employed by the First Consul in a conference with the British Ambassador on February 17th. And as the French Government thought fit to commit itself, in a document delivered to the *Corps Législatif* on February 22nd, to the view "that Great Britain was not able to contend single-handed with France", Ministers, in England, considered themselves bound to show Buonaparte that, though they did not desire war, they would fight rather than submit. On March 8th a message from the King was delivered to both Houses asking for "additional measures of precaution" in view of "the very considerable military preparations", ostensibly for colonial causes, "that were carrying on in the ports of France and Holland". Those preparations were not, in fact, very much more than was necessary for the reinforcement of scattered French and Dutch garrisons at many points, not forgetting San Domingo, where French attempts at reconquest were going disastrously. But the language of the

[1] Cf. *New Annual Register*, 1803, History, p. 171.

[2] Cf. C. D. Yonge, *Life of Lord Liverpool*, i, 103–4, for a short abstract of parts of the report which was "in the highest degree insulting and injurious to England; accusing the English Government and diplomatists of intriguing against those Turkish officials who were friendly to France, and the English Commander-in-Chief, General Stuart, of instigating his own (Sebastiani's) assassination; giving a most precise account of our force in that country, but disparaging its condition and management in every particular, affirming that "a great misunderstanding existed between General Stuart and the Pacha", and concluding with an assertion that "6,000 French would at present be enough to conquer Egypt".

message should certainly have served notice on Buonaparte that his ultimate ambitions were not to be hidden from Britain and that the very first result of a breach would assuredly be the British reconquest of the scarce-recovered colonial holdings of France and Holland. And British determination could not have been stressed more strongly than by the announcement, in a second message from the King, read on March 10th, that the Militia was to be called out.

In the Parliamentary proceedings that followed on these messages, it became obvious that Buonaparte could hardly expect that an organised peace-party would undertake to palliate or excuse his conduct as Fox and "the old Opposition" had excused and palliated the conduct of the French Revolutionaries. Fox, for example, not only allowed large naval increases to be voted unopposed but made a declaration that took him immediately into the ranks of a possible war-government.[1] He was ignorant, he affirmed, of the subjects of discussion with Buonaparte that caused Ministers to fear an unfortunate outcome. But, he declared, "if our national rights were involved, if attempts had been made to lower that rank which we had been accustomed to hold among the states of Europe, and all attempts at amicable adjustment had failed, —then he had no difficulty in saying that a war, undertaken under such circumstances would be just. Of the necessity and policy of such a war, no man could for a moment doubt."[2]

Two months of tension followed, almost as straining as war itself. On the one hand, the British Government was driven to consider projects as desperate as the payment of vast bribes to Buonaparte's brothers in order that their influence might be used to secure the First Consul's consent to the British retention of Malta for ten years while Lampedusa was prepared to take its place.[3] On the other hand, Buonaparte announced his resolution

[1] Cf. *New Annual Register*, 1803, History, pp. 148–9, for the Parliamentary proceedings of March 11th on Government's motion to add 10,000 more seamen and marines to the naval service.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 149.

[3] Cf. C. D. Yonge, *Life of Lord Liverpool*, i, 106–17, for Lucien and Joseph Buonaparte's readiness to co-operate. The British Foreign Secretary was willing to consider a gift of £100,000 for Lucien, but the Ambassador was compelled to tell him that the sum that would be necessary to satisfy the Buonaparte family and Talleyrand would be much larger than this. The size of the sum hinted at was so large that Addington finally vetoed the whole transaction which would, indeed, have caused great Parliamentary difficulties even if it had proved successful. The British Government had, of course, reason to know that the King of the Two Sicilies would have been delighted to

never to allow the British to settle anywhere in the Mediterranean, though he was obviously taken aback by the British Ambassador's prompt demand for his passports on April 18th. The First Consul was, in fact, quite unprepared to wage a naval war against Britain, while that country meant to get a quick settlement or fight before Buonaparte and his Batavian dependents had completed the dispatch of powerful colonial reinforcements, east and west, across the seas.[1] Not, however, till the beginning of May did Buonaparte really understand that the Addington Government, which he doubtless despised, had not only made up its mind to fight but was convinced that its decision would be highly popular.

For a few final days, the First Consul seems to have hoped against hope that the mediocre British Ministry would flinch before the necessity of taking the last irrevocable steps toward war. But if he had hoped that Britain might still be deceived about his ultimate aims and intentions, he was to be rapidly disillusioned. The British Ambassador insisted on departing from Paris on May 12th, and his progress home was not to be delayed by Buonaparte's last-minute efforts to gain a few invaluable days or weeks for war preparations. The British "public" seems almost to have spurned him as a baffled trickster when it learnt of the failure of his last shifts. Certainly the caricaturists, headed by Gillray, appear to have been made over-confident by such newspaper intelligence as the following:[2]

> Dover, May 15. . . . Lord Whitworth [the British Ambassador], it is said, had scarcely arrived at Chantilly, before a French messenger overtook him, requesting him to stop; but his lordship proceeded, and when he arrived at Breteuil, Bonaparte's own private secretary overtook him, with a letter from the chief consul, to which Lord Whitworth returned an answer, and has continued his route; he sleeps to-night at Parker's hotel, Boulogne; an order is arrived here, by express from London, to lay an embargo on all vessels in this port.

Here, to conclude the chapter, is a description of two well-known

cede Lampedusa rather than have British forces depart from a neighbourhood where they had been his best guarantee against complete overthrow by the French.

[1] Cf. *New Annual Register*, 1803, History, p. 279: "we must confess, that he appears to have been taken unprepared, and seemed not desirous of immediate hostilities. Every effort was exerted on his part, and the part of his minister, to gain time, and protract the negotiation. Even the delay of a few months, or even weeks, seemed to be of importance. . . ."

[2] *Ibid.*, Principal Occurrences, pp. 54–5.

caricatures, that mirrored the "public's" contemptuous attitude towards the aspiring First Consul:[1]

On June 10, 1803, Gillray published an extra-sized picture of "French Invasion—or Buonaparte Landing in Great Britain". The French fleet is nearing land, and boats, full of armed men, are putting off. Buonaparte, and a large body of troops, including cavalry, have landed; but, before they can scale the cliffs, and are yet on the shore, a few artillerymen, with two guns, have utterly routed them. It is *Sauve qui peut*. Napoleon, joining in the flight, throws away his sword; the army is utterly demoralised. . . .

A very excellent example of caricature is Gillray's "King of Brobdingnag and Gulliver" (June 26, 1803). The burly king has the diminutive Bonaparte in the palm of his hand and is critically examining him through his glass. Says he, "My little friend Grildrig you have made a most admirable panegyric upon yourself and country, but from what I can gather from your own relation, and the answers I have with much pains wring'd and extorted from you, I cannot but conclude you to be one of the most pernicious little odious reptiles that nature ever suffered to crawl upon the surface of the Earth."

[1] J. Ashton, *English Caricature and Satire on Napoleon I*, pp. 141–6.

CHAPTER X

THE NAPOLEONIC WAR BEGUN

"There has been, in the course and progress of the French revolution, something singularly capricious and whimsical. It originated in the apparent but fallacious design of ameliorating the condition of mankind. . . . Our wishes rather than our hopes, we must confess, accompanied the first revolutionists. . . . Almost the first rays of hope which dawned upon us were clouded and overcast by the atrocities which blackened even the early stages of this revolution; and the French nation was speedily involved in such a vortex of calamity without, and of cruelty and injustice within, that the philanthropist could no longer fix any rational expectation of extensive good upon their ill-concerted endeavours. Yet it was not unreasonable to hope that after a great convulsion, in an enlightened age and in a civilised community, the situation of the people would not be rendered worse than before. It was fair to hope that . . . *some* advances towards liberty would have been made. . . . It is just to acknowledge that even this expectation, moderate as it was, has been completely disappointed. A tyranny far more extensive and severe than that which was destroyed, has been established in France. . . . The friend of liberty, and even the republican, must therefore be no longer the advocate of France: he may, without a violation of principle, wish to see restored that milder form of despotism which existed under an ancient and on the whole illustrious dynasty. . . ."

The *New Annual Register*, 1804, once sympathetic to the Revolution, renounces its past.

"If we compare the individuals of which the late Administration was composed with those of the present, we shall find the present much weaker than the preceding one, except in the single case of Mr. Pitt. He certainly is, in oratory at least, superior to Mr. Addington. Lord Melville is certainly not a better First Lord of the Admiralty in public estimation than Lord St. Vincent; and no one of the new members of the present Administration can be compared to Mr. Yorke as a man of business. The Duke of Montrose, Lord Camden, and Lord Mulgrave are wretched indeed. . . . Mr. Pitt has not a single member in the House of Commons qualified to give him material support in debate; while he has to contend with opponents distinguished by talents of every description:

Mr. Fox, Mr. Sheridan, Mr. Windham, Mr. Tierney, and others. There are other circumstances which may put an end to his Administration. The King's health is precarious, and even that of Mr. Pitt disqualifies him from taking so vigorous and active a part as he did . . . his popularity has also much declined. . . . If the King's health was to decline, and the Prince of Wales to become Regent, Mr. Fox, in conjunction with Lord Moira, will become the efficient ministers. If Mr. Pitt's health was to decline . . . Mr. Addington would be his successor. . . . He has risen, since he retired, very much in public estimation. . . . The Grenville party, though it contains some men of ability, is not very numerous, and the persons of which it consists are universally unpopular. . . ."

The first Lord Liverpool reflects Court attitudes towards Pitt's Government of 1804 (July 16, 1804).

THOUGH, in May 1803, the nation was ready and almost eager for war against Buonaparte, the Addington Government had, none the less, to undergo a considerable Parliamentary ordeal when debating took place on the chequered and finally unsuccessful course of its foreign policy. The "Grenvilles", having prophesied disaster ever since they had studied the Peace Preliminaries of October 1801, were in an exceptional position to criticise during May and June 1803. And there seemed special justification for their cry that Ministers had shown alarming ineptitude in allowing Buonaparte to take his continuous series of forward steps, during 1802, without forcing him to an early explanation by means of a Parliamentary demonstration. Ministers had delayed such a demonstration until March 1803, and, by then, invaluable strategic positions, including even the Cape, had been surrendered under Peace Terms which the First Consul had turned, from the beginning, into a trap for Great Britain. Fox and his friends took another line from Grenville, Windham and Fitzwilliam.[1] They agreed that Ministers had been too inactive during 1802, when, if Parliament had been taken into Government's confidence, much that had since happened could never have come about. But, according to the "old Opposition", Ministers had plunged, from inactivity in 1802 to precipitation in 1803, and this very precipitation had powerfully served to bring on a, perhaps, unnecessary war.

Ministers had, for months, had good reason to anticipate that formidable attacks, from these different angles, would be directed against their policy. They had, in April, made a determined attempt to recruit Pitt and had desisted only when it became obvious that Pitt meant to come in as master, with a free hand to reconstruct Ministerial men and measures.[2] Encouraged, perhaps, by the division of 398 against 67 which, on May 24th, had followed the first Foxite criticisms of the war, Ministers determined to assert their independence of all overbearing party chiefs by choosing their own method of strengthening Government for war purposes. George Tierney was invited to become Treasurer of the

[1] Cf. *New Annual Register*, 1803, pp. 223–40, for Fitzwilliam as the ex-Cabinet Minister, put forward to lead the two Censure motions of June 2nd and 6th in the House of Lords.

[2] Cf. J. H. Rose, *Life of William Pitt*, ii, 483–7, for a marshalling of the evidence from the Rose and Colchester *Diaries* and the Pellew *Life of Addington*.

Navy and Privy Councillor despite the fact that his appointment was bound to be displeasing to Pitt, with whom he had fought a duel in 1798, and to Fox, whose functions as Leader of the Opposition Tierney might be held to have usurped during Fox's "secession from Parliament". On June 3rd, when the Grenville case against Ministers' foreign policy was being put, Pitt took his chance of attempting to teach Ministers a lesson. He found, he said, the Grenville picture too black though he could not approve everything Ministers had done during the negotiations with Buonaparte. Since, however, the Crown's confidence in Ministers remained, a vote of censure would only bring confusion and an ineffective conduct of the war. The House would be better occupied with military and financial problems, and so he moved the orders of the day. As Addington, Fox and the Grenville party all thought this the wrong way to terminate a censure debate of such importance, Pitt was beaten in a division of 56 against 333. He and his immediate friends thereupon left the House rather than take part in a continuation of the Censure proceedings. Soon Fox rose to announce that he, too, while unable to give approval to Ministers' conduct, would find it impossible to support the vote of censure. For one thing, Government's successors might prove more objectionable than Government itself. As Fox and his personal following had thus also decided upon abstention, the Grenville party was finally overwhelmed in a division of 34 against 275.[1] The figures were altogether too flattering to Government's standing in Parliament and the country, but they certainly sufficed to prevent further serious challenge during the remainder of the Session.

The Addington Government was further helped by the very measures Buonaparte took to avenge himself on Ministers and on Britain. The detention of thousands of British travellers in France, Holland and Italy aroused nothing but indignant scorn,[2] as did the overrunning of the King's Hanoverian Electorate, in defiance of the proclaimed neutrality of Germany. The busy invasion preparations, begun at Boulogne, evoked not only a flood of anti-Buonaparte caricature and imprecation but such a rush of volunteering, throughout the country, that Ministers seemed

[1] *New Annual Register*, 1803, History, p. 240.

[2] This was a departure from the more liberal practices of the eighteenth century and was, according even to Buonaparte, only adopted as a reprisal against "illegal" British methods at sea.

entitled to add hundreds of thousands of volunteers to the effective armed strength that would be available in the event of a French landing.[1] And, finally, the arrival of news from Ireland, on July 27th, that a Dublin rising had been attempted in circumstances of some brutality, merely allowed Ministers an almost unopposed renewal of the Irish Martial Law Act and the Act for suspending Habeas Corpus in Ireland. By the time the Parliamentary Session was ended on August 12th, Government supporters had other satisfactions. The complete failure of the attempted Irish insurrection had robbed the invasion preparations at Boulogne of all immediate meaning. And, on the sea meanwhile, there was already a considerable list of British successes with the capture of so important an island as St. Lucia as the most notable victory yet recorded. The apparent success, with which Buonaparte was being defied by an undistinguished British Government, acting without allies, seemed bound to make the gravest trouble for the First Consul. For one thing, Austria, Russia and even Prussia might, before long, be tempted to consider whether continued acquiescence in a French hegemony of Europe was either wise or necessary.

It was, indeed, on the fact that the Addington Government offered so uninspiring a basis for a new European Coalition to keep Buonaparte in check, that the best case against it lay. There were many, in fact, who, despite the new colonial successes announced, during the Recess, from the West Indies, Ceylon and Dutch Guiana, feared, in all earnestness, that Addington's Admiralty or War Office might commit a fatal mistake which would bring, not allies, but ruin to Britain. These fears became the basis of a pamphlet campaign, whipped on by such outright Pitt partisans as Canning, in order that Addington might be driven out and Pitt brought in as the man from whom salvation was sure. This was by no means to the taste of the "old Opposition", who, besides their long-standing grudge against Pitt, had little appetite for a renewal of continental Coalitions and would have preferred to encourage Ministers to continue exploring those possibilities of Russian mediation and guarantee which Government had openly hinted at in the official *Declaration* of May 1803.[2] Addington's

[1] Cf. *Memoirs of Francis Horner* (ed. 1849), p. 131, for the energy with which this Foxite lawyer and his friends were drilling, and the thought they were giving to the production of patriotic wall-placards.

[2] Cf. *New Annual Register*, 1803, Public Papers, p. 103: "But though the

own pamphleteers, for example, would have found it hard to shout louder praise of his Government than was done in the *New Annual Register* for 1803. Here is a passage from this publication, which had been "old Oppositionist" since its inception in 1780:[1]

Happily the British nation was at this very critical period under the guidance of a wise, cautious, and temperate administration.... Unconnected with faction, and studying only the true interest of the nation, this upright ministry gained the hearts of all parties.... The people of England, characteristically honest, placed unbounded confidence in a minister, whose integrity was congenial to their own ... it will hereafter be barely credited even on the stubborn evidence of figures, that the first year after the war Mr. Addington funded no less a sum than *ninety-seven millions sterling*—a mass of arrears bequeathed him by the blunders and extravagance of his predecessors. The vast additional load was, however, by the excellent and equal distribution of the public imposts, not a matter of complaint, and scarcely of observation....

Ministers knew, of course, that besides the "old Opposition's" dislike to Pitt's return, they had an even more precious safeguard in the King's determination not to have "his closet forced" by any set of men whatever. Yet despite such safeguards, and the further "strengthening of Government" they might claim to have effected by finding office for Castlereagh of the "old Administration" and Hobhouse of the "old Opposition",[2] Ministers had scant cause to welcome the beginning of a new Parliamentary Session on November 22nd. Addington's inadequacy for the combined work of leading the Commons, controlling the finances, stimulating the Army and Navy and presiding in Cabinet was privately admitted by Government supporters themselves,[3] and the "old Opposition" could not close its eyes for ever to the fact that no Ministry, so little

provocations which his majesty has received might entitle him to larger claims than those which he has advanced, yet, anxious to prevent calamities which might thus be extended to every part of Europe, he is still willing, as far as is consistent with his own honour and the interests of his people, to afford every facility to any just and honourable arrangement. . . ."

[1] Under the editorship, first, of Dr. Kippis and, then, of Dr. George Gregory. It is not sufficiently realised how much "writers for the booksellers" of their elevated type contributed to the making of "public opinion". Another of these writers, with a hand in the *New Annual Register* and much else, was Alexander Chalmers.

[2] Cf. *Public Characters, ix (1806–1807)*, for the career of Hobhouse who was appointed Secretary of the Board of Control. Castlereagh became the Board's President.

[3] Cf. C. D. Yonge, *Life of Lord Liverpool*, i, pp. 128, 139.

respected as Addington's, had ever held office within living memory.[1] Fox had actually been preparing to make Catholic Emancipation his leading interest of the Session, but, having decided, on the advice of Grattan and Ponsonby, that some postponement was called for, he was, perhaps, readier for alternative forms of activity.[2] Late in November, he seems to have determined to end his "benevolent neutrality" towards the Addington Government and to have adopted the resolution of openly joining in the "new Opposition's" criticism of the inadequacy of Addington's Defence measures.[3] The "new Opposition's" leader, meanwhile, Lord Grenville, was making a last effort to induce Pitt to join in an outright and open opposition as the only way to sweep Addington's inefficiency quickly from the scene. He failed to shake Pitt's reluctance to undertake formal opposition, a reluctance due, at least partly, to Pitt's desire not to awake George III's resentment and make his own recall as Prime Minister more difficult.

In January 1804 there were new developments, which altered the party situation considerably. A return of the King's mental malady brought new chances of a Regency and emphasised the possibility that Fox's special relations with the Prince of Wales might, before long, give him, rather than anyone else, control of the political scene.[4] It was, in these circumstances, that Fox was formally invited by Grenville to join him in outright opposition and was given some information on Pitt's unsatisfactory doubts and hesitations.[5] The programme of attack, as outlined by Fox to his following, was to be based largely on Government's unhappy and unworthy handling of the problems raised by the need for arming the 400,000 Volunteers and organising them, to their own satisfaction and the country's, for playing as proper a part

[1] Cf. *Romilly Memoirs*, ii, 105–6, for Romilly's view, expressed on May 31st, that: "An administration whose talents were generally thought so meanly of, or I may say who were so universally despised, was never before at the head of a great country."

[2] Cf. *Memorials of C. J. Fox*, iv, 12.

[3] *Ibid.*, iii, 438. The "new Opposition's" inner councils may best be studied in Lord Grenville's papers as reproduced in the Fortescue MSS., vii.

[4] Cf. J. H. Jesse, *Memoirs of the Life and Reign of George III*, iii, 341–7, for the relevant information, mainly gathered from the *Diaries* of Lord Colchester and Lord Malmesbury.

[5] Cf. *Memorials of C. J. Fox*, iv, 15–16, for Fox's letter of January 27, 1804: "I have a message by our old friend T. G. [Thomas Grenville] from his family and friends, stating their wish to co-operate with me (and friends, of course) in a systematic opposition for the purpose of destroying the Doctor's Administration, and of substituting in its place one upon the most comprehensive basis possible. . . ." Addington's nickname of Doctor arose from his father's profession.

against invaders as Regulars and Militia.[1] To Fox, the constitutional desirability of "arming the people", when Regulars and embodied Militia were undergoing an expansion that would once have been considered fatal to "Liberty", appeared self-evident, and on February 19th rumour announced that "co-operation" had been arranged between the "Old Opposition" and the "New". On February 27th, Pitt lent some justification to the view that he, too, might "co-operate", when he chose to side with Windham's criticisms of Government's Defence policies and to ignore Government's attempted explanations. Then, on March 15th, the "co-operating" Oppositions allowed Pitt to take the lead in a debate on the Navy which produced some disquieting allegations and the unsatisfactory Government majority of 230 against 161. But it was soon after the Easter Recess, on April 23rd, that the decisive debate was staged on a motion from Fox that the Bills for the country's defence should be revised, and consideration given to measures to improve the state of the defences. Pitt and Windham supported Fox, and their division of 204 against 256 proved Government's death-knell.[2] On April 25th Government's vote for going into Committee on the Bill to suspend the Army of Reserve Act sank, most significantly, to 240 against 203. Next day Addington communicated to the King his intention of resigning, and the flustered King had, for a number of days, to be dissuaded from the notion of trying to keep the "three Oppositions" at bay "by the utmost exercise of his authority", in the shape, perhaps, of a Dissolution of Parliament.[3] Not till April 30th did Lord

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 16: "The first object (first in point of time) is to oppose a bill which Ministers are to bring in on the Volunteer business, and to propose a general system of arming the people on principles I approve, reducing the Militia to its old quantum, putting an end to bidding for substitutes, &c. . . . [*ibid.*, p. 18] . . . they will certainly bring in *some* bill, which will be distasteful to a great number of the volunteers, relative to the *election* of officers, *fines for absence, &c.*" Harriet Martineau's *History of England, 1800–1815* (ed. 1878, pp. 103–5) has an interesting summary of the pike- and pitchfork-arming of some of the Volunteers, and deals with other charges against Government thus: "the government first damped the spirit of the volunteers by discouragement and discourtesy; then made the terms of exemption from militia service by volunteering uncertain or impossible by failing to supply arms and accoutrements; and finally ruined a few citizens, here and there, by fines and convictions occasioned by the uncertainty of the exemption order".

[2] *Memorials of C. J. Fox*, iv, 48–50, for Fox's almost equal attention to the divisions in the Lords where matters were moving just as steadily against Government.

[3] Cf. D. G. Barnes, *George III and William Pitt*, p. 432. Fox suspected that the King was endeavouring to keep Addington in office but guessed rightly that "his colleagues will not stand by him, and rather prefer their chance with Pitt, to that of victory with the Doctor".

Chancellor Eldon ask Pitt, in the King's name, to submit, in writing, a plan for a new Government.

It will always be debated whether Pitt did right, in the course of the next few days, to accept George III's ban both on Catholic Emancipation and on Fox's participation in the Government. In his private conscience, Pitt could urge that any other conduct on his part would drive the King into the complete insanity on the verge of which he was now tottering and that George III deserved better treatment than this from him personally and from the country as a whole.[1] If a Regency, too, were unnecessarily brought on through over-pressure on the King, it was arguable that great constitutional difficulties might be expected at home while, abroad, all Britain's friends would be discouraged to the point of despair. Fox, it seems, had expected such involved casuistry on Pitt's part rather than a firm stand against the King's prejudices and caprices. Indeed, he held that Pitt, having owed all his Ministerial career to "criminal" connivance in George III's unconstitutional extension of his prerogative in 1783 and 1784, would be acting out of character if he made a stand now that might rob him, after all, of the coveted return to the Premiership.[2]

Fox, of course, left all Pitt's former supporters, with whom he had lately been co-operating, perfectly free to make their own decision about going into a Government from which he was excluded, intimating, indeed, that he did not hold them bound by the slightest personal obligation to himself. But the views of at least three of those invited to join Pitt's Cabinet and of a number of others, who might have expected lower places, were thus communicated, to Pitt, by Lord Grenville on May 8th:[3]

> . . . we rest our determination (not to engage in the administration which you are now employed in forming) solely on our strong sense

[1] Cf. *Diaries and Correspondence of the Rt. Hon. George Rose*, ii, 77–9, 116, for the admission, even by those most favourable to the King, that insanity was now never far off. It should be remembered, too, that Pitt had had to undergo some most distasteful moments when "loyal" members of the Addington Government had reproached him for co-operating with one, who had Fox's record of devotion to "the majesty of the people".

[2] Cf. *Memorials of C. J. Fox*, iv, 45, for Fox on Pitt in a letter to Grey of April 19th: "as to any arrangement in conjunction with Pitt, I see and feel the difficulties (amounting to nearly an impossibility) more and more every day. He is not a man capable of acting fairly, and on a footing of equality with his equals. Lord G. [Grenville] confirmed to me the extraordinary fact of Pitt never having told him of his offer to continue without Catholic Emancipation, in the year 1801. . . ."

[3] *Court and Cabinets of George III*, Lord Grenville to Pitt, May 8, 1804.

of the impropriety of our becoming parties to a system of government, which is to be formed at such a moment as the present on a principle of exclusion.

It is unnecessary to dwell on the mischiefs which have already resulted from placing the great offices of Government in weak and incapable hands. We see no hope of any effectual remedy for these mischiefs, but by uniting in the public service "as large a proportion as possible of the weight, talents and character, to be found in public men of all descriptions, and without any exceptions". . . .

An opportunity now offers, such as this country has seldom seen, for giving to its government, in a moment of peculiar difficulty, the full benefit of the services of all those who by the public voice and sentiment, are judged the most capable. . . . The wishes of the public on this subject are completely in unison with its interests, and the advantages which not this country only but all Europe and the whole civilized world might derive from the establishment of such an administration . . . would probably have exceeded the most sanguine expectations.

We are certainly not ignorant of the difficulties which might have obstructed the final accomplishment of such an object, however earnestly pursued. But when in the very first instance all trial of it is precluded . . . we cannot but feel that there are no motives . . . which could justify our taking an active part in the establishment of a system so adverse to our deliberate and declared opinions.

It would seem that, public causes apart, Fox's magnanimity in advising, not merely Grenville, but his own special friends of the "old Opposition", to accept office under Pitt, had some effect in producing a rally for the excluded statesman. Lord Fitzwilliam, Lord Spencer, Windham and Grey decided, like Lord Grenville, to refuse the Cabinet office they might have had from Pitt.[1]

The Cabinet that Pitt was driven to construct, as a result of the critical refusals he had received, lacked prestige and authority. It could hardly have been otherwise, seeing how widely it was known that Ministers had been brought together as a make-shift, half of them, indeed, from the derided and fallen Addington Administration, when Pitt's original plans had had to be surrendered. Fox, too, saw no reason for abandoning opposition, and with discontented "Grenvilles" and Addingtonians to draw on, besides his own following, found a more stimulating and hopeful field than any he had had since he was abandoned by Portland's "Old Whigs" in 1794. To Fox's mind the struggle was still one of vital political principle—a struggle against harmful

[1] Cf. Earl Stanhope's *Life of Pitt*, iv, 176–7, for the Cabinet list of fifteen (including Fox) which Pitt would have liked to nominate.

and over-strained use of the Royal prerogative in home politics, and, in foreign affairs, against the hide-bound traditionalism which refused to accept inevitable and, it might be, beneficial continental change and dreamed only of new European Coalitions without reflecting that Coalitions, formed only for defeat, might leave Britain's peril greater than when unengaged Great Powers still imposed large checks on Buonaparte's freedom of action. But the spirit of Fox's opposition will best be understood if a quotation is given from a political letter he wrote on July 24, 1804:[1]

In summa, nothing could have fallen out more to my mind than what has happened: the party [of Opposition] revived and strengthened, Pitt lowered, and, what is of more consequence in my view, the cause of *Royalism* (in the bad sense of the word) lowered too. There is a very general dissatisfaction which, in the present state of things, is the better for not being *violent*, for violence would produce *reaction*, and perhaps revive the royalist fanaticism. The conduct of our new friends has been such as to satisfy those who were most prejudiced against them, and, what could hardly be expected at his time of life, Windham has improved in speaking as much as any young man ever did in a session. . . . What do you think of the fuss that is made about acknowledging the new Emperor [Napoleon]? . . . all Europe has done as much against the Bourbons in acknowledging Bonaparte as First Consul of France, as they could do in recognising him as Emperor. If we refuse this last, it is the Republican, or at least the Consular Government of which we make ourselves the champions. Yet they say Russia will peremptorily refuse; and it is remarked that Austria has not yet sent her congratulations. *Cela fait pitié!* Some here are foolish enough to hope that this will produce an extension of the war—*bad politicks* in every sense; they are wrong, I believe, in fact, and much more wrong in thinking such an extension would be good for us just now. Prussia without Austria would be worse than nothing; and the latter in her present state could only be a burden upon us, and possibly nay probably, furnish means of aggrandising both France and Prussia . . . it is quite vexatious to see and hear such folly. Austria with all her weakness, is the only effectual banner to look to in better times against France, at least so these politicians say; and yet they would in the most disadvantageous moment, and not called upon by any actual aggression on the part of France, risk her total annihilation. . . .

Something of the characteristic weakness as well as the characteristic strength of Fox's views, in foreign affairs, is to be seen in

[1] *Memorials of C. J. Fox*, iv, 57–9. The letter was sent to Lord Holland, Fox's nephew, in Spain, where, among other things, he had been commissioned to search in the State Papers, at Simancas, for material that might prove helpful for his uncle's *History of James II*.

the above passage. It might be illogical for the great monarchical Powers of Europe to be shocked and angered by the First Consul's assumption of the Imperial title, in May 1804, but their anger, shared by nearly all in Britain, was none the less an important political fact. So was the general indignation, on the Continent, at the way in which German territory in Baden had been violated, during March, in order that the Bourbon prince, the Duc d'Enghien, might be seized and executed for alleged complicity in the Royalist plot whose discovery so much facilitated the First Consul's path to an Imperial throne.[1] The truth is that Fox's political temper kept him out of touch with some of the profoundest mass-emotions of his day. Here, for example, are descriptions of two events in the first weeks of Pitt's new Government whose net effect must have been to stimulate "Royalism" and to encourage Pitt to explore possible bases for a new European Coalition:[2]

On the 18th of May, the whole volunteer force of the metropolis went down by water to Greenwich to receive at Blackheath their colours, presented by the magistracy, in the presence of the Commander-in-Chief and many hundreds of the highborn and powerful. It is on this occasion that we meet the first mention of the Princess Charlotte of Wales as appearing in public. She was now eight years old. She stood beside her uncle, the Commander-in-Chief, the Lord Mayor, and the standards. At the final review, the Duke of York ordered a royal salute, as each company passed the little girl. The colours swept the ground in her honour as they were carried by; "which compliments," we are told, "she returned with a wave of her hand from her bosom, in a very attractive manner".... The other ceremonial was the general fast, on the 25th of May. When ordered, it was for the purpose of humiliation on account of the King's illness, as well as of the peril of the kingdom from foreign foes. Now, the form was changed into one of thanksgiving for the King's amendment in health, while the lowly tone about the national dangers was preserved. In the streets, nothing was heard but the bells of the churches, except when the gay companies of the Volunteers, in their bright uniforms, marched to the churches. After service, the shops remain closed: and the streets were more silent than ever; for every body was gone to see the parading of the volunteers, who spent the rest of the day at drill....

[1] Harriet Martineau, *History of England, 1800–1815*, p. 115, has an assertion that resentment was shown even in France, half a theatre audience leaving when the First Consul entered, on an occasion soon after Enghien's execution became known.

[2] *Ibid.* (p. 116), for this attractive rendering of the contents of the newspapers. And from this point General Buonaparte will be called Napoleon.

But Pitt's best chances for feeling his way towards a European Coalition did not come until after there had been some difficult moments in Parliament on his Additional Force Bill to provide more man-power for Defence. All the three Oppositions could point to the Bill's alleged defects and miscalculations,[1] and Ministers had some anxious hours in June, particularly on the occasion when Government's majority was no better than 265 against 223.[2] But when Parliament was prorogued, on July 31st, for a Recess that was destined to last until January 1805, Government had relative freedom to make full use of its opportunities. One obvious direction in which exploratory diplomacy could be intensified was indicated by the fact that the Tsar of Russia and the King of Sweden had, in May, appealed to the German Powers to insist on redress for Napoleon's violation of German territory on the occasion of the Duc d'Enghien's seizure. And if a whole Coalition programme for Northern Europe could, in consequence, be tentatively suggested at Stockholm, Petersburg and Vienna, even wider possibilities promised to open up from the withdrawal of the Russian Ambassador from Paris on August 28th. The breach between Russia and France was occasioned by Napoleon's refusal to withdraw French troops from Hanover and Naples, and to find compensation, as promised to Russia, for the King of Sardinia's loss of Piedmont. An extension of Coalition programmes to Italy was by no means unwelcome in London.

The Anglo-Russian negotiations of 1804–5 were far from easy to conduct. The Tsar Alexander claimed that it was not only Napoleon who violated international law, and skill had to be used to prevent Coalition negotiations from running into side-channels in which there would have been endless argument on British war practices at sea, not to mention the future permanent status of Malta and the Ionian Islands. To make matters more difficult, Pitt finally decided that an end must be put to the intolerable situation under which both the cowardly Spanish Government of

[1] Cf. *Diaries and Correspondence of Rt. Hon. George Rose*, ii, 119, for Pitt's authority on House of Commons strength, estimating their numbers there as follows: Fox's friends 79, Grenville's 23 and Addington's 68. On many subjects they would be joined by the Prince of Wales's friends, estimated at 41, and by many of the 58 doubtfuls. Rose was convinced that Pitt's task was, in these circumstances, virtually impossible and twice tried, when circumstances gave him the chance, to induce the King to ease the strain on Pitt by withdrawing his ban on Fox's entry into the Government.

[2] Cf. J. H. Rose, *Life of William Pitt*, ii, 509–10, for a good short account of the contests on the Additional Force Bill.

the Prince of Peace, and Napoleon himself, were taking overmuch advantage of Britain's reluctance to declare war on Spain.[1] By the summer of 1804 the Prince of Peace had been driven by Napoleon a good deal farther than the provision of subsidies, in lieu, it was said, of Treaty troops due to Napoleon under Franco-Spanish Treaty. A French naval squadron was allowed shelter at Ferrol, crew-reinforcements were permitted to travel overland, and significant dockyard measures began in Spain that denoted that the Prince of Peace had made another surrender and had undertaken to put the Spanish Fleets on a war-footing as soon as the American treasure ships arrived. If overwhelming force had been directed against the treasure ships, early in October, and a bloodless surrender obtained, many later difficulties might have been avoided. The Spanish commander, however, ventured an unsuccessful fight against the force which was sent, and the consequent bloodshed, when England and Spain were at "peace", led to complaint and delay at St. Petersburg as well as to a Spanish declaration of war. The whole episode, fundamentally inevitable, promised to be a rare gift to Opposition when Parliament reassembled.

Pitt, indeed, had Opposition much on his mind during the Recess, and gave considerable time, thought and effort to the problem of weakening it for the coming Session. It would, doubtless, be wrong to put down all Pitt's anxiety to reconcile the King and the Prince of Wales to Pitt's Parliamentary necessities. But no political eye failed to grasp the Parliamentary profit that Pitt would have won if he had succeeded in detaching, from the "old Opposition", that special part of it known as "the Prince of Wales's friends" and peculiarly identified with Moira in the Lords and Sheridan in the Commons. Such a separation, if it had been effected, would not merely have eased Pitt's situation in Parliament but would have had good effects in Ireland, where the Catholic demand for immediate Emancipation might have been hushed by Moira's assurances, and Fox robbed of a specially promising chance of making trouble for Pitt.[2] The ill-feeling,

[1] Cf. C. D. Yonge, *Life of Lord Liverpool*, i, 85–90, for a long description of the ignoble conditions reigning at the Spanish Court, written by the British Minister on December 22, 1802.

[2] Cf. *Memorials of C. J. Fox*, iv, 59–65, for some Opposition anxieties. To Grey, Fox reported the Prince and Moira as follows: "With respect to Lord Moira's meeting with Pitt, he [the Prince] said that Pitt had expressed a particular wish of having Moira in the Cabinet, and a general wish to admit many

however, between Prince and King proved too inveterate to allow of more than a formal reconciliation in the Royal Family, and Pitt was finally driven to accepting the notion of strengthening himself Parliamentarily by detaching the despised Addingtonians from Fox and the Grenvilles. As a result of negotiations in December, it was agreed to reconstitute Cabinet and Government in order to admit the Addingtonians to a proportionate share of offices. Some of Pitt's oldest friends were in despair that he should have agreed, for the advantage of some votes in a division, to make his Administration a still closer approximation to the derided Addington Government which he had himself helped to eject from office.[1]

Before Parliament met on January 15th, Napoleon, with an eye, perhaps, on Fox, decided to provide additional matter for its debates by sending forward another offer to negotiate for peace. To this day, the language of his communication of January 2nd rings insincerely and theatrically and it seems certain that its principal objects were to create division in Britain, to probe the extent of Anglo-Russian agreement and to place Napoleon before France and the Continent as the real lover of peace, struggling against Britain's inveterate and irreconcilable hostility. Here are the vital parts of the letter to George III:[2]

Sir and brother,
Called to the throne of France by Providence, and by the suffrages of the senate, the people and the army, my first sentiment is a wish for peace. . . . I consider it as no disgrace to make the first step. I have, I hope, sufficiently proved to the world, that I fear none of the chances of war; it besides presents nothing that I need to fear. . . . I conjure your majesty not to deny yourself the happiness of giving peace to the world . . . there never was a moment more favourable. . . . This moment once lost, what end can be assigned to a war which all my efforts will not be able to terminate? Your majesty has gained more within ten years, both in territory and riches, than the whole extent of Europe. Your nation is at the highest point of prosperity; what can

of the P[rince's] friends. I rather think Moira, whom I saw separately, added hopes of time bringing about *all*. That Moira had declared explicitly that he could do nothing without me and my friends. . . . I understood from Moira that he was again to see Pitt or Melville . . . I did not much like this. . . . My opinion is that notwithstanding all these intrigues . . . Pitt and Melville will not be able to get authority to offer him [the Prince] anything that will shake him."

[1] Cf. J. H. Rose, *Life of William Pitt*, ii, 517, for the despair of Rose and the irritation of Canning. Rose expected nothing but that: "We shall drag on a wretched existence and expire not creditably."

[2] *New Annual Register*, 1805, Public Papers, pp. 191–2.

it hope from war? To form a coalition with some powers on the continent? The continent will remain tranquil: a coalition can only increase the preponderance and continental greatness of France. To renew intestine troubles? The times are no longer the same. To destroy our finances? Finances founded on a flourishing agriculture can never be destroyed. To take from France her colonies? . . . does not your majesty already possess more than you know how to preserve? If your majesty would but reflect, you must perceive that the war is without an object. . . .

CHAPTER XI

THE PASSING OF PITT AND FOX

"It is the object of the Pitt crew, to cause it, upon all occasions to be believed, that, if their master had lived, and they had continued in power, the evil, upon each occasion successively complained of, would not have existed. What insupportable impudence! When every evil under which the country groans, can be, and has been *proved*, clearly proved, to have originated in the shallow brain and the selfish heart of their loquacious leader. To gratify his selfish ambition, his love of place, his passion for domineering, his hatred of every one who was not ready to flatter and to crawl to him; to this end it was, that all the measures, which have finally led to our present situation, were adopted. He cared nothing about the *country*; nothing more than about the Wilds of America; self, his own self; his own power of ruling, by fair means or foul, was all he thought about.... His followers appear to have acquired the rights of their master. They now hold, as nearly as they are able, the same sort of language. The grand operator is gone, to be sure, but the same impudent pretensions are uttered by the underlings. First they form a coalition, which they tell the poor nation, is to save it for ever, and to hurl Napoleon from his imperial throne; and they tell them, besides, that the Emperor of Russia is to be the main spring of this coalition. The coalition is broken up ... and the Emperor of Russia sends an humble embassy to ask for peace.... Now, one would, under such circumstances, expect *silence* from the authors of the coalition; and, when they saw their successors endeavouring to obtain a peace as well as they could, one would expect them to act as if they thought themselves fortunate at having escaped from punishment of some sort or other; but, instead of this, we hear nothing but their insolent attempts at justification; nay they do not stop there, but have the abominable audacity to affect *to blame their successors*, that things are in a bad state upon the continent, and that we are likely to have hard terms of peace. Rightly, however, are the new ministry served. They were well told of this before hand. They were duly forewarned, that, unless they caused a faithful report of the state of the nation to be made, they would, and they ought to be, answerable for all the evils that should be felt during their administration. The Fox part of the ministry had not the courage to attempt this. The Grenvilles and the Addingtons were implicated in all that Pitt and his crew had done;

and though Mr. Fox clearly saw what must be the consequence of omitting to cause a report, such as we have just spoken of, to be made, he had not the resolution to say, 'upon that condition only will I enter the cabinet'. If he had, he would, at this day, have been minister *indeed;* and as he would have avoided all the painful occurrences of the last session, it is probable, that he would have escaped that bodily illness, which is now a subject of so much regret."

Cobbett's Weekly Political Register, August 16, 1806.

On January 15, 1805 the reassembled Parliament heard a Speech from the Throne whose most important passage dealt with the "peace" offer that had just come from Napoleon.[1] Ministers might have pointed out that Napoleon's theatrical letter had given not a single assurance in regard to Holland, Switzerland, Italy or Hanover. But they contented themselves with a passage that indicated that the offer would be examined in conjunction with the continental Powers with whom "confidential intercourse" was being maintained, and especially the Emperor of Russia. Though he did not oppose the immediate business before the House, Fox rose, during the discussion of the King's Speech, to indicate its deficiencies and omissions. The principal deficiencies, according to Fox, were in the failure to give more information on the character of the negotiations proceeding with Russia, and in the apparently unfair treatment of Spain's case against the British measures of force that had precipitated the Spanish declaration of war. The omissions, pointed to by Fox, indicated, even more clearly, other contentious business that Opposition intended laying before the House. There was no mention of Catholic Emancipation in the Speech though, according to Fox, war conditions made it essential to have Irish loyalty. And no information had been given to the House on the measure of success that had attended the Additional Force Bill. Though Government, during the previous summer, had made the Bill its principal military interest, Fox understood that it had proved a complete failure in bringing the required number of men to the colours.

The introduction, on February 8th, of a Bill to continue Habeas Corpus Suspension in Ireland marked one of the subjects on which Opposition decided to make a pertinacious stand. It was contended, in essence, that Ireland should not be subjected to exceptional legislation, restrictive of freedom, without the clearest necessity having been proved to Parliamentary committees, charged with the examination of relevant and, it might be, confidential documents. Mere general assertions of continued danger or mere reference to the alleged activities of United Irish Committees at Paris or elsewhere would not do.[2] Obstinate as were Opposition's objections to Government's Habeas Corpus Suspension for

[1] *New Annual Register*, 1805, Public Papers, pp. 178–80.

[2] Cf. *Cobbett's Parliamentary Debates* for the proceedings of February 8th, 14th and 15th in the Commons and February 21st in the Lords.

Ireland, they never furnished the chance of such a Parliamentary display as was undertaken, on February 11th, in both Houses, on the measures of force used, the previous autumn, against Spain. It was Opposition's endeavour to show that Government's action against Spain had been needlessly violent, and that the result had been both the disastrous junction of all Spain's naval forces with the French and the sinking of Britain's moral reputation to the level of Napoleon's. This was not the kind of debate calculated to give Opposition its best divisions, for it savoured too much of justifying the enemy.[1] In point of fact, Ministers were acquitted in the Commons by a majority of 313 against 106 and, in the Lords, by one of 114 against 36.

In the circumstances of the day, Government faced a more dangerous ordeal when, on February 15th, the Opposition began debating the poor results obtained from the Additional Force Bill, passed by Ministers during the 1804 Session. Great claims had been made at the time for the consequences that might be expected from Pitt's profound study of the most hopeful methods of securing a steady flow of reinforcements to the Regular Army. Now Opposition pointed to such disquieting figures as the mere eleven men so far provided, under the Bill, by Kent, the 0 that stood as the North Riding's contribution, and the beggarly total of 613 raised by the whole country. Opposition had much to say, too, on the apparent injustice of the Bill's methods of affixing and collecting "deficiency" payments from the ratepayers of those parishes behindhand with their flow of Additional Force recruits. Government's case against the critics was, of course, that the Additional Force Act was hardly yet in full operation and that, in particular, the pressure of "deficiency" penalties had not yet set the whole "influence" of every area to work upon recruitable material. But it scarcely helped Government's case that two of the Ministerial speakers, essaying to defend the impugned Act in the Lords, should be recently-recruited Addingtonians who had opposed Pitt's measure in 1804 as much less promising than one devised by their Administration.[2]

[1] *Memoirs of Francis Horner*, pp. 150–1, for his impression that the debate was an unsatisfactory one.

[2] Cf. *New Annual Register*, 1805, pp. 34–5, for the particularly damaging incidental admission by Addington himself, now Viscount Sidmouth, that "the opinion which he originally entertained of the measure was not only unchanged, but was confirmed and strengthened by every thing which had occurred since the passing of the bill. . . ."

Opposition's division of 45–113 in the Lords (February 15th) and of 96–242 in the Commons (February 21st) hardly represents the full measure of Government's embarrassment and anxiety. Windham, in particular, with a long experience as Secretary-at-War behind him, had put forward an alternative recruiting programme which seemed, to Opposition, much more likely than Pitt's to secure the flow of "general service" troops needed for overseas operations. Windham's suggestions have special interest because they indicated some of the lines "progress" was destined to take, in recruiting matters, during the nineteenth century, a century when, for very good reasons, conscription for overseas service continued to be impossible, even in war-time, and compulsory home-defence service in the Militia, too, had to be allowed to fall into abeyance after 1815. According to Windham, recruiting would improve if enlistment for a term of years was offered instead of what was virtually enlistment for life.[1] Then, the abolition of "degrading punishments for trivial offences"—or, in other words, the end of flogging for petty breaches of discipline—would, he considered, have a beneficial effect, and so, too, would altered methods of garrisoning those West India islands whose climate had the worst reputation for causing mortality among the troops. In Windham's interesting plan, a large part of those islands' garrisons would, for the future, have consisted of coloured troops, and the white stiffening would have been obtained not by indiscriminate drafting of raw recruits from home, but by the use of men who had been specially acclimatised by preliminary service, first, in the Bermudas and, then, in the Bahamas. Of course, even in Windham's view, a main reliance of the recruiting department would still have to be a considerable cash sum as bounty to the recruit but he showed reason to believe that it would make for better-behaved soldiers if part of the bounty was retained and paid over at the end of a soldier's term of service. Finally, Windham did not forget that the regiments of the line needed a flow of competent and reliable subalterns almost as much as they needed a flow of privates to the rank and file. Windham earnestly pressed for an increase in subalterns' pay.

On March 6th Sheridan undertook a renewed Opposition attack

[1] The *New Annual Register*, 1805, History, pp. 40–5, plainly thought Windham's speech important enough to merit a very full report, a report of well over twice the length allotted to Canning, the Minister who was put up to reply. Ex-Sergeant-Major Cobbett had apparently been consulted by Windham.

upon the Additional Force Bill with the added advantage of a new set of returns, taking its operation to February 5th. Seven months of the new system in England and Wales, he claimed, had produced a mere gross total of 1295 men, 266 of whom had deserted or been discharged. But the "general service" position was much worse for only 323 of the original 1295 had enlisted for such service while, in Ireland, not a single "general service" enlistment was yet shown among the 1031 men recruited. After making great play with such further disquieting facts as the desertion of all the eleven men, who had originally figured as Kent's contribution to Additional Force recruiting, Sheridan broke some bitter jests on various members of the Government, Pitt himself not being spared.[1] It was the beginning of a long debate which can scarcely have helped Government despite the majority of 267 against 127 which voted down Opposition's suggestion of repealing the Additional Force Act altogether.

Finance also brought Ministers some Parliamentary anxieties during February and March. Pitt had opened his Budget on February 18th, and his proposed expenditure of forty-three millions, including five millions merely earmarked for "further extraordinary expenses", indicated very clearly that Ministers expected, before long, to be financing continental armies of some size. Twenty millions of the total estimated expenditure of forty-three were to be borrowed, and, under the original Ministerial plan, interest and sinking fund on this new debt would have been provided by a 25 per cent increase of income-tax and new charges on letters, horses, legacies and salt. But Opposition, aided by "independents", grumbled successfully enough to enforce the withdrawal of the proposed duty on agricultural horses and on salt exportation. A supplementary Budget had, therefore, to be introduced on March 22nd under which the resulting annual deficiency of over £400,000 was made good by a number of troublesome increases in Customs and Excise duty. And on that very day a good deal of encouragement came from Opposition to a further move against the Legacy Duties as hard upon "younger children" customarily "provided for" in this way. Happily for Ministers, the objectors were over-ruled by 164 votes against 72.[2]

[1] Cf. *Cobbett's Parliamentary Debates*, under March 6th. Sheridan was vastly amused by the fact that the Additional Force returns still showed only one recruit from the Cinque Ports, Pitt's own special province as Lord Warden.

[2] *Ibid.*, March 22, 1805, for Grey's long speech of objection.

It was doubtless fortunate for Ministers that Russia, like Sweden a little earlier, had definitely signed a Treaty of Alliance with Britain before news came of Ministers' next set of Parliamentary difficulties. It was on April 11th that the Treaty of St. Petersburg was signed, well before intelligence was available in the northern capital of the grievous blow that had been struck at the credit of the Pitt Administration by revelations apparently fatal to the character of Viscount Melville, First Lord of the Admiralty and Pitt's closest political friend. These revelations, as laid before the Commons, on April 8th, by the prominent Oppositionist, Whitbread, apparently furnished convincing proof that Melville had, for years, permitted speculation, for private profit, with official funds, and there was the further damaging allegation that if Pitt had been reasonably vigilant at the Exchequer, Melville could never have gone on for years as he did.[1] And though, on April 10th, Melville resigned, Opposition could and did make much further trouble by insisting on Melville's prosecution and by trying to force Pitt, in advance of a legal decision, to have Melville's name struck from the list of Privy Councillors.[2] Fortunately for Ministers, Napoleon's greed and violence could nearly always be trusted to reduce a minor domestic scandal to its proper place. Napoleon, not satisfied with having added, in March, the Royal crown of Italy to his Imperial crown of France, had proceeded, immediately afterwards, to organise the annexation of Genoa's territories to his French Empire. He could scarcely have done anything more likely to drive the Tsar to immediate war preparations, for the annexation of Genoa indicated very plainly that Napoleon had not the slightest intention of surrendering the already-annexed Piedmontese hinterland despite Russia's persistent championship of the plundered King of Sardinia and the half-promises that had been obtained for him. The Emperor of Austria, too, began hurried war preparations as soon as Genoa's annexation became certain.[3] Every pledge that had been made him at Lunéville,

[1] Cf. *Cobbett's Parliamentary Debates*, April 8, 1805, for Whitbread on Pitt: "I have been informed that the right hon. gentleman, several years ago, when he last held the same situation which he now enjoys, was informed of the practice of withdrawing the public money contrary to an express act of parliament, and that no steps whatever were taken to put an end to it. . . ."

[2] *Ibid.*, May 6, 1805, for the chagrined Pitt having to announce that he had yielded on this question too.

[3] Cf. *New Annual Register*, 1805, History, p. 302: "Austria had hitherto refused to accede to the treaty of concert. She had acquiesced in the assumption of the crown of Italy. . . . But this last act of usurpation, combined with the

regarding French non-interference in Italy, had been more and more cynically violated. And it was quite clear that Napoleon's assumption of such a provocative title as King of Italy indicated a growing readiness, on his part, to seize the Venetian territories which, at Lunéville, had been Austria's compensation for signing away Belgium to France and Milan to the Republic which Napoleon had since converted into the Kingdom of Italy.

If the continental situation thus began moving in Ministers' favour during the early summer of 1805, it remained uncertain for a considerable time whether Austria and Russia would really fight. The Austrian Government, in particular, though undertaking to rearm, did so rather in the hope of forcing Napoleon to "reasonable" terms than in the resolute determination to make a definite end of all the unjustifiable French annexations undertaken since 1792. Accordingly the changing continental situation can hardly be reckoned as counting decisively in Ministers' favour even as late as the prorogation of July 12, 1805. Meanwhile Opposition had undertaken some important demonstrations. In particular, it undertook to argue the case for the very important Roman Catholic petition that had been laid before both Houses on March 25th.[1] The case for Catholic Emancipation was opened by Grenville in the Lords on May 10th and was voted down, on May 13th, by a Government majority of 178 against 49. In the Commons, despite the strong combination of Fox and Grattan, Emancipation was defeated by a majority of 336 against 124. There was, of course, some consolation for Opposition in the knowledge that many of the votes cast against them were those of men who, like Pitt himself, approved of Emancipation in principle and objected only to the "unseasonable" time which the Irish Catholics had chosen for making their application.

On June 20th another Opposition demonstration was undertaken. On the previous day both Houses had received a Royal Message which Opposition interpreted as meaning that Ministers

formidable military attitude which France had assumed in the north of Italy, convinced her that nothing was to be hoped from pacific councils. Urged therefore by the remonstrances of the allies, and impelled by the strongest feelings of resentment and desperation, she abandoned her former cautious system of policy, and consented to become a party to the league.... Her armies were therefore diligently recruited, and large reinforcements were sent to Italy and the Tyrol...."

[1] *New Annual Register*, 1805, Public Papers, pp. 185–9, gives the petition in full with the names of all the signatories, who included all the lay leaders of the Irish Catholic community.

proposed, before proroguing Parliament, to have five millions voted which they might bestow upon Allies, yet undefined, and for purposes which, if Parliament was prorogued, would be completely at Ministers' discretion. Both in the Commons and the Lords there was vigorous denial that Ministers had the right to claim such confidence as this. Government's naval management, it was said, had been proved to be bad by the ability of Villeneuve to get the Toulon fleet, without opposition, into the Atlantic and, then, after a junction had been effected with the Cadiz fleet, to take the two cruising at large and menacing priceless British interests. And as Ministers had not been able to conceal the fact that two Cabinet resignations were pending owing to Addingtonian grievances in regard to the allocation of Ministerial offices, Opposition found in this division in the Cabinet itself another reason for witholding confidence from Government. In the Lords, indeed, Ministers could only defeat a motion, urging that Parliament should not be prorogued, by a majority of 111 against 58. They did rather better in the Commons where Grey had led Opposition's attack and had, perhaps, tried to prove too much.[1] He would doubtless have done better if the two Cabinet resignations had not been delayed until July 10th, two days before the prorogation for which everything was, by that time, in train.

On June 21st, the day after Opposition's demonstrations, Fox undertook, in Parliament, a more personal warning to Ministers on the dangers which a too adventurous war-policy might bring. Fox's warning was neither partisan nor spiteful, and when, within a few months, some of his fears were only too amply justified by events, it becomes plain why, on Pitt's death, he was called to the Leadership of the Commons. Even a summary of the speech which Fox made helps to explain the unique position he now held in Parliament.[2]

"It seemed to be the prevailing opinion," urged Fox, "that to engage with Russia alone would make our situation more difficult than at present, unless Russia or Austria could be included in the confederacy. Without a sure prospect of efficient co-operation, he should feel unhappy if he were to suffer the vote to pass without entering his protest against it. No man could tell what would be the issue of the war. . . . Was it

[1] Cf. *Cobbett's Parliamentary Debates*, under the date June 20th, for Government's majority of 261 against 110 on Grey's motion.

[2] This convenient summary is taken from the *New Annual Register*, 1805, History, pp. 279–80.

intended that at the present season of the year, when Austria was unprepared, any operations should be undertaken, or that only every thing should be arranged for war in the next spring? If Austria were to move, and the consequences, as probably they would, be disastrous, what would become of our hope of continental connections? What of the liberties of Europe? What of the prospect of setting limits to the power of France? . . . The character of the British government in Europe, unfortunately, was that it was actuated by selfish motives in instigating the continent to war for British interests. He hoped the opinion was false: but if we were to instigate to war, whilst the continental powers themselves wished to be at peace, it would alienate them wholly from us. . . . It would be highly indiscreet in us to form an alliance for the purpose of continental war with Russia and Austria; and it would be still more indiscreet in Austria. If such an alliance could be formed with Russia, Austria, Prussia, and the other powers on the continent, as would gain their good will, without attempting to arouse them before their own interests, in their own view of them would call for their exertions; such an alliance would afford hopes that we might obtain reasonable grounds of peace. If terms of peace were to be proposed by us through Russia to France, let them, Mr. Fox said, be reasonable—such as Europe would think reasonable."

Fox's ability to gauge continental views more accurately than almost anyone else in Parliament was evidenced in another little speech he made on June 21st. He prophesied that Austria could be tempted to almost certain defeat if British subsidy offers were made high enough but that Prussia would not be found in any camp joined by Austria and might well be found in the opposite camp. Often during the Recess, begun on July 12th, Pitt must have had reason to remember Fox's observations as, with a naval situation that remained anxious until Villeneuve's defeat at Trafalgar on October 21st, he attempted to set in motion a Coalition designed, if possible, to include Prussia and the South German States as well as Austria, Russia, Britain, Sweden and Naples.[1] But there was a strong party in Prussia which interpreted Pitt's great offers to Berlin as demonstrating how much anxiety there was in Britain to divert Napoleon's threatening Armée d'Angleterre from Boulogne. And, in South Germany, they were not only as convinced as at Berlin that Austria would

[1] Cf. J. H. Rose, *Life of William Pitt*, ii, 535: "For a time Pitt also hoped to add the South German States, and in all to set in motion a mass of 650,000 men against France, Austria contributing 250,000, Russia 180,000, Prussia 100,000 (later on he bargained for 180,000), Sardinia 25,000, Naples 20,000, Sweden 16,000, and the small German states the remainder."

probably be defeated before Russia, Britain or anybody else could effectively intervene but they were already listening to French offers of aggrandisement, at Austria's expense, if they resisted Austria's claim to march troops through their territory towards the Rhine on any "pretence" of "defending the Empire".

If, however, Pitt pressed the King hard in September for permission to bring Fox into the Cabinet,[1] it was not merely because of Fox's clear-sighted pessimism in regard to the true state of Europe. It was mainly because Fox's accession to the Administration would have done more than anything else to increase Government's prestige at home and abroad. At home Ministers had been very hard taxed during the past Session to cope with the criticism of the exceptionally experienced bands of politicians who had made Fox's exclusion from office their one ground for declining to enter the Administration. Yet things promised to get worse rather than better in Parliament during 1806 unless the large increases of taxation, almost inevitable in the 1806 Budget, were proposed by a greatly strengthened Government.[2] And, abroad, even the most hardened cynics at Berlin, Munich and Stuttgart, would have accepted an Administration, headed by Pitt, Fox and Grenville, as entitled to talk more authoritatively on how Belgium and the Rhineland might be divided among them, when recaptured from France, than a Ministry of which the jesters were saying that "it contained two good men, William and Pitt".

Pitt's efforts to enlarge and strengthen his Government failed before the King's obstinate refusal to admit Fox to office. But for weeks and even months afterwards the British Prime Minister

[1] Cf. *Diaries and Correspondence of the Rt. Hon. George Rose*, ii, 198–200.

[2] Cf. J. H. Rose, *Life of William Pitt*, ii, 530, for an account based closely on the sources: "As the prospect of further taxation was calculated to depress Pitt's supporters and inspirit the Opposition, he proceeded to Weymouth in the middle of September to lay before the King an important proposal. The formation of a truly national Administration being more than ever essential, he besought George to admit certain members of the parties of Fox and Grenville, especially in order to facilitate the passing of the next Budget. The Monarch, however, was obdurate, asserting that Pitt had done well in the past session and would probably fare better still in the next. On 22nd September he repeated these statements to Rose . . . and was quite unconvinced by his arguments that in the present state of parties the Budget could scarcely be passed. . . . The King would not hear of any change and proved more intractable on this topic than in the year before. . . . In fact, in Rose's manuscript is a statement, prudently omitted from the published Diaries, that George, on returning to his residence at Weymouth, declared his resolve rather to risk a civil war than to admit Fox into his councils. . . ."

considered the prospects of the European Coalition he had gathered to be rosy enough to warrant a general optimism. Austria, for example, instead of shrinking from the test of war, seemed to be showing unusual enterprise in adopting the ambitious forward strategy of Mack; large Russian armies were hurrying across Poland in aid of Austria; and bold plans had been agreed upon by which Britain, Russia and Sweden were to co-operate in landing troops in North Germany, capable of liberating Hanover and Holland from the French yoke. A further plan envisaged the arrival of British and Russian troops on the friendly soil of Naples in order to help, from there, in the destruction of French ambitions in Italy, the Adriatic and the Ionian islands. And before intelligence of the egregious Mack's first difficulties came in, there were moments of supreme hope when it seemed that the Prussian Government, stung by the violation of its Anspach territory by French forces hurrying across Germany, would join in the struggle against France.

Even the news of Mack's surrender at Ulm, balanced as it soon was by the report of Trafalgar, did not end the Prime Minister's hope that territorial and financial pledges might yet bring Prussia in.[1] But while Prussia was playing for what Pitt could not give, George III's Hanoverian Electorate, there came the Austro-Russian catastrophe at Austerlitz, and this was followed not merely by Austria's disastrous separate peace at Presburg but by the even more disquieting readiness of Prussia to accept Hanover from Napoleon's hands. By the time Parliament met on January 21, 1806, the situation had become even blacker, and the direst forebodings, made by Fox during the preceding Session, seemed to have been justified to the full. In some respects, indeed, the ugly reality of January 1806 proved a good deal worse than had been foreseen by Fox in his gloomiest mood. Even Fox had never prophesied that the complete collapse of Britain's continental plans would imperil the considerable professional army that had been recruited and trained in Britain after so much Parliamentary debate and administrative effort. Yet if the vast fleet of transports, that had just taken a fine British army across the North Sea, for the reconquest of Hanover, had not been recalled before a man had been landed, Britain's only effective troops might have become

[1] Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 453, for Pitt, on December 5th, still writing optimistically to his special envoy at Berlin: "you will perhaps be angry with me for saying that my hopes are still sanguine".

entangled in a hopeless struggle against the Prussians while Britain itself lay bare to an invader.[1]

Parliamentary proceedings, however, on January 21st, were not what they would have been normally. Pitt, struck to the heart by the collapse of all his plans, lay dying, and Grenville in the Lords and Fox in the Commons, while expressing dismay at the country's plight, agreed to a few days' postponement of the inevitable debate on responsibility. Fox's language indicated that he intended, if he could, to bring down the Government.[2] Nothing less could have been meant by his references to the "extraordinary ill-concerted and ill-conducted plans that had led to those unexampled calamities".[3] But Pitt's death, on January 23rd, brought further changes in the normal course of Parliamentary procedure. To the King's dismay, Pitt's Cabinet colleagues had decided, by January 25th, that it would be unwise in them to attempt to face the Parliamentary storm that was about to break.[4] They resigned, and the formation of a Cabinet from among the Opposition must already have been in question when Parliament gathered, on the 27th, for business which would normally have centred on Opposition motions regarding the "late calamities". But, in the circumstances, the most controversial business, before Parliament, proved to be a motion, from a private member of the Commons, asking for a public funeral for Pitt and the erection of a monument in Westminster Abbey "with an inscription expressive of the irreparable loss the nation has sustained by the death of so excellent a statesman". The retiring Ministers doubtless considered that Fox began digging the grave of his now inevitable Leadership of the House when he felt compelled to take upon himself the unenviable task of denying the "excellence" of the dead man's statesmanship. It would probably have been wiser for Fox to absent himself from the House, but he was too courageous to shirk what he considered to be his responsibility

[1] Cf. *Memoirs and Correspondence of Viscount Castlereagh*, vi, 103–12, 119.

[2] Cf. *Diaries and Correspondence of the first Earl of Malmesbury*, iv, 348, for that veteran's view, communicated to the Duke of York, that the Ministry was doomed: "I represented to him how perfectly impossible it was when we looked to the string of adverse incidents which had occurred abroad, and which had operated on the public mind in a way (however unjustly) as misfortunes owing to the King's Ministers, and that so powerfully, that I felt convinced, even *with Mr. Pitt alive* and in possession of all his powers, he could not have stood—and that without him, it was utterly out of the question for the remainder of the Cabinet to carry on the King's business."

[3] *New Annual Register*, 1806, History, p. 11.

[4] Cf. C. D. Yonge, *Life of Lord Liverpool*, i, 207–9.

and he suffered an almost unavoidable defeat by 258 votes against 89.[1]

The work of constructing a new Cabinet, strong enough to meet the numbers and stratagems of the late Administration, was soon, formally, in the hands of Grenville. Him the King had summoned rather than put himself directly in the hands of Fox, but Fox it was who nominated and led the Cabinet majority. The politicians of that day counted the Fox Cabinet contingent as follows: Fox himself as Foreign Secretary, Grey as First Lord of the Admiralty, Fitzwilliam as Lord President, Lord Henry Petty as Chancellor of the Exchequer, Lord Moira as Master-General of the Ordnance and Lord Erskine as Lord Chancellor. The Grenville contingent was reckoned only as three—Grenville himself as First Lord of the Treasury, Spencer as Home Secretary and Windham as Secretary for War. The remaining name on the original Cabinet list of ten was Lord Sidmouth's who had been invited, as Lord Privy Seal, to bring his little bands of friends in Lords and Commons to the aid of those expecting the enmity of just those Pittite wits who had helped to wound and destroy the Addington Administration.[2] But Sidmouth, fearful of finding himself completely isolated in an unfriendly Cabinet, bargained for, and finally obtained, the nomination of a friend, Lord Chief Justice Ellenborough, as the Cabinet's eleventh member.

It is, perhaps, hardly worth following the Parliamentary Session in detail to its end on July 26th. By consenting to the inevitable, if distasteful, compromises of coalition government, Fox obtained the opportunity of taking two steps of major importance.[3] He got the chance of opening a long negotiation with Napoleon and, despite his ardent desire to restore peace, to grow more and more convinced that Napoleon's rapacity and perfidy combined to make a safe or honourable Treaty next to impossible. And, before he had arrived at such pessimistic conclusions and while he was still negotiating with some hope, Fox succeeded in committing Parliament to the principle of a speedy Abolition of the Slave Trade.

[1] *New Annual Register*, 1806, History, pp. 15–27, for a relatively full account of the debate with much of Fox's speech given verbatim.

[2] Cf. *Diary and Correspondence of Charles Abbot, Lord Colchester*, ii, 37.

[3] Cf. Fortescue MSS., viii, 197–200, for a third step attempted in vain against the resistance of the East India Company—the dispatch of his follower, Lord Lauderdale, to India as Governor-General in the hope, doubtless, of securing some control of the course of policy there.

Against an ever-watchful Pittite Opposition, moreover, further measures of some importance were pressed to success despite what a later generation would have called their "liberal tendency". Those measures were, principally, the Slave Importation Restriction Bill under which British shipping was denied the right of carrying slaves to foreign colonies even before complete Slave Trade Abolition;[1] the Bill permitting the opening of the West Indies ports to American shipping in despite of the Navigation Acts; the Bill "for making better provision for soldiers" with its plans for obtaining better recruiting by offering long-service pensions as well as facilities for short-term enlistment; and the enactment by which an heroic attempt was to be made to clear off the almost incredible arrears in the auditing of Government accounts, arrears concealing, it was suspected, much fraud and peculation.[2]

It cannot be denied but that, worthy as were these activities of the new Government, they aroused very little popular interest or enthusiasm. The man in the street, indifferent about Ministers' legislation and positively antagonised by their Budget of higher taxation,[3] did, however, take the liveliest interest in the fate of Fox's peace negotiations. In Fox Britain was felt to have the one man capable of inducing Napoleon to come to a tolerable and even reasonable settlement, and occasionally the hopes of the "public" ran high enough to make them forget some of the ugly truths of the position. Here is Cobbett, in July, reproving what he considered to be the "public's" incurable optimism:[4]

[1] This was the 46 Geo. III, cap. 52. Another Act, in restriction of the Slave Trade, passed in 1806, was the 46 Geo. III, cap. 119, the Act "to prohibit for two years, after the end of this session, any ships to clear out from Great Britain for Africa for taking negroes on board, unless previously employed in the African trade or contracted for as such". The 46 Geo. III, cap. 52, had to overcome some dangerous opposition from Slave Trade, Shipping and Naval interests, though the Opposition, as such, did not make the matter a party issue as in the case of the Bill for opening West Indies ports to American shipping.

[2] Cf. *Cobbett's Parliamentary Debates*, May 21, and June 23, 1806, for some astonishing figures given by Lord Henry Petty, Chancellor of the Exchequer. George Rose, of Pitt's Treasury Board, argued that the figures were not as serious as they sounded.

[3] Pitt had known that a further increase of taxation was inevitable and this had spurred him on to his attempt to form a coalition with Fox and Grenville. Now the new Ministers had to bear the burden of the public dislike for the heavier and "more oppresive" Income Tax rightly deemed indispensable. Cf. the Gillray cartoon, "*The Friend of the People*" *and his Petty New Tax-Gatherer, paying John Bull a Visit* (May 28, 1806).

[4] *Cobbett's Weekly Political Register*, July 19, 1806, p. 82. Meanwhile Speaker Abbot had already written in his Diary under June 29th: "Mr. Fox's physicians

PEACE.—It is truly surprising, that men should upon meeting one another, ask: "do you think there is any *hopes* of peace?" It is indeed, surprising, that, after all they have seen, they should still look forward to peace as an object resembling *a peace of former times*; and that they should appear to expect from a treaty, signed under the present circumstances, a disbanding of regiments, a dismantling of ships, a reduction of taxes, and, in short, all the usual consequences of a change from a state of war. . . . One would think, that they had neither seen nor heard for years past; that they had no recollection of the peace of Amiens; and that the battle of Austerlitz and all the other events of the present war had passed totally unnoticed by them.—Amongst the fundholders and the jobbers of the alley, some effect will be produced by a treaty of peace; but as to people in general, a peace will produce no effect at all. Peace, if made under the present circumstances of Europe, . . . can be . . . nothing more than a mere *cessation of hostilities*, a season for new and more formidable preparations for war. . . .

Cobbett had, of course, altered greatly of late, and especially since being prosecuted and heavily fined, in the summer of 1804, for libel on the Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland and the Irish Solicitor-General. No longer the ardent anti-Jacobin of the *Porcupine*, he was fast becoming the very reverse, and if not yet specifically calling for "radical reform" of Parliament, was certainly calling very loudly for a "radical reform" of expenditure and taxation. And to look through the *Register* file of 1806 is to see him slipping ever more naturally into the part of the Radical tribune of the plebs, busy scenting out "abuses" true or false, and denouncing them in sledgehammer style. During the summer of 1806, for example, the *Register* devoted much space to the alleged Army wrongs suffered by the unsavoury military adventurer, Cochrane Johnstone, and to the pertinacious attempts of the Anglo-Indian adventurer, James Paull, to impeach the Marquess Wellesley for oppression of native princes.[1] "Barrack abuses" and the "Delicate Investigation" into the alleged "levities" of the Princess of Wales

last night had a consultation, and the result was that they acquainted him with the absolute necessity of his immediately giving up business, and retiring into the country; that no medicine could have its effect until he did so. To which he answered that 'the business now in his hands was so pressing as to render that impossible; and that he would go on at all risks'."

[1] *Cobbett's Weekly Political Register* gave very great space to Cochrane Johnstone's wrongs on July 5 and August 30, 1806. Yet the Commander-in-Chief's refusal to reinstate or promote him seems absolutely justified both by the charges that had already been brought against him and by the great Stock Exchange swindle of 1814 that ended his career. Both in this case and Paull's it is impossible not to suspect that Cobbett may have had some financial inducement to put so much space at their service.

were two more topics that provoked Cobbett's thunder, and to these might already be added Stock Exchange speculators and Royal Dukes, expecting increased "pensions" from the Civil List while doing nothing to deserve them.[1] So fast, indeed, was Cobbett proceeding on the road to Radicalism that, even before Fox's death on September 13th, he professed to see little difference between "Whiggism" in office and the detested "Pittite crew". Fox had been warned, Cobbett claimed, not to take office unless a full investigation was guaranteed into the mismanagement, or worse, of the Pittite ex-Ministers. But, according to Cobbett, rather than have his entry to office delayed for a month or two, Fox had surrendered every reasonable demand. And in Cobbett's words:[2]

We now know, that Pitts and Grenvilles and Foxes are all alike. . . . We have the proof, that, from the moment they are in place, they act, successively, just as their predecessors acted. When in place, they *all*, with equal zeal, defend and abet such practices as it is useless here to name. I know not which of them goes farthest. I know not which has least shame; and all the difference, that I am now able to discover between the Pitts and the Foxes is, that while the latter, when out of

[1] *Cobbett's Weekly Political Register*, July 12, July 19, and September 6, 1806, for leading articles on "Pensions to the Royal Family". The last of these articles made almost a "seditious" use of a late birthday reception given by the Duke of Clarence in which a great company, headed by the Prince of Wales and the Royal Dukes, had sat down to a table, headed by Mrs. Jordan, the actress and mother of "the Duke's numerous family".

[2] *Ibid.*, August 16, 1806, p. 229. This writing is, of course, poles apart already from Cobbett's journalistic beginnings in England, after eight exciting years in America. In commencing the daily *Porcupine* on October 30, 1800, he announced his sentiments thus: "Having, in America, witnessed the fatal effects of revolution . . . having seen a country . . . plunged, by intriguing demagogues, into never-ceasing hatred and strife; having seen a people, once too fond of what they called liberty to bear the gentle sway of a British King, humbly bend their necks to the yoke, nay, to the very foot of a set of grovelling despots; having, in short, seen the crime of rebellion against monarchy punished by the tormenting, the degrading curse of republicanism, it is with the utmost astonishment and indignation, that I find many of those, who have the press at their command, endeavouring to bring down on my native country the very same species of calamity and disgrace. Notwithstanding the example of America, and the more dreadful example of France, I find the emissaries of the Republican faction (for such it really is) still preaching fanaticism and infidelity, still bawling for that change which they have the audacity to denominate *reform*, still exerting all their nefarious ingenuity in sapping the foundation of the Church and the Throne . . . for me, who have seen acts, passed by a republican legislature, more fraudulent than forgery or coining . . . for me, who have seen republican judges become felons, and felons become republican judges; for me to fold my hands and tamely listen to the insolent eulogists of republican governments and rulers, would be a shameful abandonment of principle, a dastardly desertion of duty."

place, severely condemn peculation, the former, whether in or out of place, always defend it; and, really, I think this is the least dishonourable course of the two.

Not long afterwards Cobbett was engaged in an electoral campaign to make Sir Francis Burdett, M.P. for Middlesex and Paull, M.P. for Westminster, as part of a new plan to offer the "nation" salvation over the heads of both the "factions". Cobbett had now shed anti-Jacobinism with a vengeance, for Burdett had already converted himself, with Horne Tooke's help, into what the fearful regarded as a "Jacobinic" version of Wilkes.

CHAPTER XII

"INNOVATION" UNSADDLED, 1807

"The sort of army, and the means of raising it, that some people want, would only be a less evil than conquest by a foreign invader; what I wish to see preserved from French subjugation, is not the physical England alone, with its two-footed inhabitants, but artificial England, the constitution, and that marvellous exception to all common experience—the freedom of the people. I have a great confidence in the efficacy of this system to furnish the means of its own defence. . . .

"My anxieties are fixed upon quite another subject from that which occupies your letter—Ireland; where there is the fairest and surest opportunity of doing good, not only against the present danger, but through all the succeeding ages of this country, and where there are the materials of unceasing agitation, perhaps of some fatal explosion, if that opportunity be neglected. Since the present administration came into power, they have adopted a new set of maxims for the government of that injured country, and have enforced them by including Catholics in their distribution of patronage, as well as by repressing as much as possible the hostile and malignant spirit of the Orangemen. While Mr. Fox lived, whose power the Catholics regarded as a pledge that as much would be done for them as was practicable, the continuance of this impartial and mild spirit of administration might have anticipated the effects of more decisive measures; but now some of these are absolutely necessary, in order to renew a pledge which they lost by his death. . . . I am persuaded the time is now come when that which ought to have been bestowed long ago, as an act of justice to that country [Ireland], must be conceded as a precaution to our own security. . . . I shall regard it as a fatal oversight if another session of Parliament shall pass away without a most decisive measure being adopted with regard to the church revenues of Ireland, and the rights of Catholic subjects to rise in the army and state. . . ."

The Whig M.P., Francis Horner, September 29, 1806
(From *Memoirs and Correspondence of Francis Horner*).

"Feb. 5th. [1807]. The question of the second reading of the Bill for the abolition of the slave trade was carried in the House of Lords by a majority of 64; the numbers being, for it 100, against it 36. This measure had always been rejected in the House of Lords during the administration of Mr. Pitt,

notwithstanding all the zeal he professed on the subject, and the very great personal and ministerial influence which he possessed in that House."

From *Memoirs of Sir Samuel Romilly*, the Whig Solicitor-General of 1806–7.

THE pathetic death of Fox, on September 13, 1806, enforced considerable changes on the Administration whose principal figure he had been. His place at the Foreign Office was taken by Grey, now known as Viscount Howick, but though peace negotiations were not yet broken off at the time of Fox's death, their fate seemed almost certain. Months before he died, Fox had recognised the intolerable character of Napoleon's ever-expanding claims and pretensions and had prepared to break off the peace-parleys if the French negotiators persisted in their expectation that the "magnificent" offer of Hanover, Malta and the Cape would reconcile the British to such a bagatelle as abandoning the pledges they had given the King of Naples to protect him in his last territory of Sicily. And the strangely varied suggestions, offered by French diplomacy, as to the "compensations" open to the unfortunate British ally, made Napoleon's unscrupulous violence and perfidy irrefutably plain. Now the Neapolitan Bourbon was offered a Kingdom of the Balearic Isles, though it would presumably have to be wrenched from Napoleon's own ally, Spain, as Hanover, for George III, would have to be seized from the very power, Prussia, whom Napoleon had put in possession; now there was a suggestion for annihilating the independence of the Hanse Towns of North Germany in order to make a kingdom of them which might be "exchanged" for Sicily; and, finally, there were even plans for wrenching Albanian territory from Turkey.[1]

Fortunately for Ministers, the final and complete break-down of the peace-parleys, at the beginning of October, did them surprisingly little harm. The "public" had lost all real hope for weeks before the event occurred, and had turned, instead, to exult in some excellent pieces of war-news that had begun coming in. On September 4th, for example, had arrived intelligence of the shattering victory won, at Maida, in July, by the British Army of

[1] Cf. *Papers relative to the Negociation* laid before Parliament in December. The Hanse Towns suggestion was sent to Fox on July 1st; the Albania suggestion on July 9th; and the Balearic suggestion on July 20th. By the time these detailed suggestions arrived Fox was almost out of action, prostrated by bouts of terrible pain, but still hoping that his friends in the Ministry and Lord Lauderdale, a trusted follower soon to proceed to France, would be able to prevent any needless break-down of the negotiation. But Lauderdale himself had given up all real hope early in October and was pressing the French Government for his passports (Fortescue MSS., viii, 373, 375).

Sicily against the French garrisons holding Calabria for the newly-enthroned "King Joseph of Naples", Napoleon's brother. Though the British forces did not stay long on the mainland, Maida and the spirited and successful British fighting that followed did a great deal to restore British spirits and self-confidence.[1] Then on September 13th, had come the even more surprising and stimulating intelligence that a considerable portion of the British force, which had captured the Cape at the beginning of the year, had crossed the South Atlantic and seized so vital a point as Buenos Aires from Napoleon's Spanish ally.[2] And to complete the temporary exhilaration in England the end of September found the Court of Prussia preparing to send an ultimatum to Napoleon which was almost certain to result in war. There were many British optimists in early October, prepared to believe that a Fourth Coalition of Britain, Russia, Prussia and Sweden, to be joined at the first sign of success by Austria, would prove altogether too much for Napoleon.[3]

It was in view of the more optimistic public temper of the autumn that Ministers determined to ask the King for a Dissolution of the Parliament elected after the Peace of Amiens in 1802. Despite the sardonic jests that had been made concerning the speed with which a Parliamentary majority had transferred itself from the old Cabinet to the new, Ministers had hardly had an easy moment since taking office. The hostile "Pittite crew", so often denounced by the *Political Register*, was no mere figment of Cobbett's imagination but represented the tremendous "interests" that had been built up, during the twenty-two years of Pitt's predominance, in places so diverse as Parliament, the Government Departments, the East India Company, the Bank, Lloyds, the Stock Exchange, and even the newspaper offices. In their own departments, for example, Ministers knew themselves to be surrounded by officials, capable of passing harmful reports on to ex-Ministers who were widely believed to have the ear of the Court and to be certain of reappointment as soon as the Cabinet

[1] Cf. even *Cobbett's Weekly Political Register*, September 13th, for some patriotic elation of this "*proof*, of the *decided superiority* of English over French troops".

[2] *Ibid.*, September 20th, shews Cobbett in a more morose vein: "The shallow-brained rabble . . . will see nothing but the *mines* and the *money*, waggon-loads of which latter are, it is said, already arrived. . . ."

[3] *Ibid.*, October 11th, for the angry Cobbett on "the ravings, which are afloat, in some of the newspapers, relative to *a new war upon the continent of Europe*".

of the day should have furnished the first good excuse.[1] The Court, indeed, by which was now beginning to be meant not the nearly blind old King on the verge of insanity but rather the Queen and the Duke of York,[2] seems to have thrown out hints, on Fox's death, that Grenville should take the opportunity of reconciling himself with the Pittites even at the cost of the Foxite alliance. Though Grenville had already begun some negotiations, he was too honourable to abandon his allies and much too stiff to think of opening Cabinet and Government to the Pittites in the full measure required.[3] Rather than yield to the Pittite demands, he had embraced the Foxite alliance more closely and had resolutely requested the Dissolution of Parliament. He hoped, by "managing" new elections, to seat himself more securely in office, and there certainly was a case, in such critical times, for a Government stronger in Parliament than his had been during the last Session. He, perhaps, expected, among other things, that the large Foxite participation in his Ministry would be a help at election hustings. Fox's name and zeal for popular "liberty" was certainly often invoked.

[1] Cf. *Diaries and Correspondence of the first Earl of Malmesbury*, iv, 350–4, for one account of the "Pittite" activities. As early as June, Malmesbury was writing to Canning of the Duke of York, their pillar at Court, thus: "The Duke considers the duration of the present Government as very doubtful, and that if it does last it will be attended with very serious misfortunes to the country. That it was greatly to be desired that Mr. Pitt's friends should unite *under a chief*. That they should recollect what *he* did in 1783 (*mark this*), and not be discouraged by appearances of numbers against them, *in the first instance*. That the finding of a leader was difficult, as there were amongst them as they now stood too many persons of the same rank, and nearly the same political consideration. That neither the Dukes of Rutland nor Beaufort would do. The Duke of Portland *ought* to be the man, but he was fearful his health was not equal to it. . . . On my asking him if he had seen the Duke of Portland, he said he had . . . and that he thought him wonderfully recovered. . . . I asked him if he had at all touched on this point to the Duke; I replied I was sorry for it, as I was persuaded one word from him would go a great way. 'I am to see him again to-day,' said the Duke of York. . . . The Duke requested secrecy as far as he was concerned."

[2] Cf. the notorious pamphlet of August 1808, *A Plain Statement of the Conduct of the Ministry and the Opposition towards his Royal Highness the Duke of York* for a candid admission: "Since the days of William III there have existed in this kingdom two avowed parties—an opposition and a ministry. As a defence from the overwhelming predominance of either, every succeeding monarch has deemed it necessary to have a kind of domestic party . . . whom he may occasionally interpose between even his ministry and himself. . . . Now, the immediate and almost necessary members of this party are certainly the king's family and household. . . . The heir-apparent alone, for very obvious reasons, is seldom a member of this closet council. . . . Let it not, therefore, be objected to the Duke of York, that he has followed the course of things, and, with the queen, is at the head of the king's friends."

[3] Cf. A. G. Stapleton, *George Canning*, pp. 95–107, for some negotiations with Canning begun even before Fox was dead.

Grenville's request for a Dissolution seemed to the Pittites at once a menace and an opportunity. Ministers, it was felt, would certainly strengthen their Parliamentary position if given the chance to make use of Crown and Government patronage during an election.[1] But the Crown, they claimed, had every reason to decline accepting advice which, in a time of crisis, would dissolve a Parliament two and a half years before its legal term merely that Ministers might gain a party advantage. This opinion was actually conveyed to the Court, and a very plain hint was given that, if the Court chose to break with Ministers on the point, a Pittite Government could be formed in support of the Crown.[2] To the intense disappointment of some, who even talked of the Court's playing them false, the Grenville Administration was not destroyed but was allowed the Dissolution.[3] The Court, it would appear, was not yet convinced that a Government of authority could be formed from the debris of Pitt's last Cabinet; and Grenville was acute enough to force the Court to come to a relatively speedy decision between himself and his would-be successors. A speedy decision could, in the circumstances, only be one in his favour.

This book is hardly the place for a meticulous examination of the degree of party advantage obtained by Government at the autumn elections of 1806.[4] It would seem to have been considerable enough for Ministers to plan a relatively bold Session to begin on December 15th. But before the nature of Ministers' plans is examined, it would be well to say a few words on the altered election atmosphere of the year. When compared, for example, with the atmosphere of 1802, the election atmosphere of 1806 undoubtedly bears marks of having been affected by a new type of

[1] Cf. C. D. Yonge, *Life of Lord Liverpool*, i, 219, for Hawkesbury to the King thus: "I cannot avoid most anxiously requesting your Majesty's attention to the effect of a dissolution of Parliament at the present time. Such a measure would have the inevitable effect of throwing the whole influence of Government in the borough elections into the hands of the present Administration. It would secure to them the strength they would thereby acquire for the whole of a new Parliament. It would determine in their favour the opinions of many persons who are undecided at present. . . ."

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 220, for Hawkesbury's revealing caution: "There are several points connected with the subject of this letter which I could explain more fully to your Majesty in conversation. . . ."

[3] Cf. Stapleton's *Canning*, p. 111, for Canning on some of the specially disappointed: "I have found a disposition to shift the blame to the K.[ing], as if he had authorised assurances which he did not act up to, and then to defend *him only* on the ground of his having been taken by surprise."

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 112, shews that politician dubious about estimates from his own side that Government's gains had only been in the region of ten or twenty.

"public opinion", a "public opinion" profoundly dissatisfied with the gross and expensive jobbery which had become the very basis of the country's government and administration. It was a special irritation to many that, when the jobber-in-chief of the whole of Pitt's twenty years had, as Viscount Melville, been discovered in something far graver than normal jobbery, means had just been found to have him declared "Not Guilty" in the House of Lords. It was a parallel irritation that junior members of the Royal Family, some of them of dubious reputation, had just been voted a large increase of income, despite their father's immense wealth and the heavier and more stringent Income Tax.[1] "Public opinion" during the summer of 1806, was, in fact, of a cast which tempted Cobbett to offer himself as candidate at a Honiton by-election just as it later tempted Major Cartwright to offer himself at Boston during the General Election and Henry Hunt to intervene during the Wiltshire elections.

Prophetic of the future as was the junction of such names as Cartwright's, Cobbett's and Hunt's, its immediate importance, in 1806, should not be exaggerated. Cobbett, who was doing more than any other person in the country to create the new "public opinion", was given a very forceful lesson in the realities of practical politics when he put himself before the voters of Honiton. Long afterwards he described the matter thus:[2]

> When I went as a candidate to Honiton in the year 1806, I began by posting up a bill, having at the top of it this passage of Scripture: "Fire shall consume the tabernacles of bribery". After this I addressed myself to the people of the place, telling them how wicked and detestable it was to take bribes. Most of the corrupt villains laughed in my face; but some of the women actually cried out against me as I went along the streets, as a man that had come to rob them of their *blessing*.
>
> The whole of the inhabitants of the borough, the whole of the persons who return two members to Parliament, are bound together in an indissoluble chain of venality.... One man told me that he and his wife had lived all their lives in the borough, and had never before heard a word of truth from a candidate.

Cobbett's sons were later to declare that their father's experiences at Honiton took him finally into the camp of those who held that the national fortunes would never improve unless there was a

[1] Cobbett's articles in his *Weekly Political Register* of July 12, July 19, and September 6, 1806, were the strongest he had yet written on the Royal Family.
[2] *Cobbett's Weekly Political Register*, xlviii, 500.

"radical reform of Parliament".[1] And, in point of fact, Cobbett's experiences at Honiton were not confined to the venality of Honiton's four hundred voters but extended to the dubious ambitions of some who declaimed with lofty patriotism, on the wrongs of the public. In Cobbett's company at Honiton was the corrupt military adventurer, Andrew Cochrane Johnstone, who was using the *Political Register* to fight a private war with the Commander-in-Chief's entourage in order to force himself back into important employment.[2] With the aid of gold, gained in the capture of French merchantmen (of which he was a very active exponent), Johnstone's nephew, Lord Cochrane, did possess himself of one of the Honiton seats at the General Election of 1806 as a professed enemy of corruption among public men and "enormous abuses" at the Admiralty.[3] But he was soon busy fighting his own battles rather than his uncle's.

By far the most significant and noteworthy contests of the 1806 General Election were those at Westminster and in the County of Middlesex. At Westminster the "popular" candidate was Paull, accuser of the Marquess Wellesley, and with him seems to have been the great bulk of constituency feeling, impressed by the pertinacity with which he had attempted, in the last Parliament, to have Wellesley brought to "justice" for oppression of native princes in India. But Paull's friends, though marshalled by such fuglemen as Sir Francis Burdett and Cobbett, eventually failed to seat their man against the determination of all the "interests", headed by Government, to "compromise" amongst themselves by putting Sheridan into Fox's old place and sending with him a naval candidate, almost neutral in politics, the crippled Admiral Sir Samuel Hood.[4] In the County of Middlesex, too, the popular wish for Sir Francis Burdett was successfully baulked though only at the cost of a complete breach between the "popular party" and Grenville's Government. Sir Francis Burdett had made it plain

[1] *Selections from Cobbett's Political Works* (as issued by his sons), ii, 81.

[2] *Public Characters, 1809–1810*, pp. 316–20, gives a short note explaining how he had lost the Governorship of Dominica owing to a petition from the Assembly and how a court-martial had sat in consequence of a mutiny in the West India regiment he commanded.

[3] *Ibid.*, pp. 296–7, for a pledge in his first election address at Honiton: "I never will accept of any sinecure or pension, or any grant of the public money, and I never will ask or receive any such for any person whatever, that may be in any way dependent on me."

[4] Cobbett's *Political Register*, devoted much space to the Westminster election during October and November, 1806.

that he would accept an unopposed return though he would not undertake to find a farthing for a contested election after the sorry experience he had had in spending one large fortune on election expenses in 1802 and a second fortune in 1804 in a vain effort to secure re-election.[1] His supporters, if not Burdett himself, might have felt some gratitude to the Foxite wing of the Ministry if the old Foxite member, George Byng, had undertaken to treat Burdett as a friend, entitled to the second vote of his supporters. But Byng professed his complete independence of any other candidate while the Grenville wing produced a candidate of their own, in place of a retiring Pittite, and so made a contest certain in which leading Foxites, offended by Burdett's attitude towards Fox's memory, made it plain that they would rather vote for Byng and Mellish than for Byng and Burdett.[2] The result was that, in the end, Burdett was defeated, Byng and Mellish became members for Middlesex, and the whole "popular party" adopted an attitude of outright hostility to "Whiggism" as only differing from Toryism in greater hypocrisy.[3] Large play was soon being made with the enormous sums the Grenville family, in its different branches, took from the "public" in the shape of sinecure-incomes and official salaries.[4]

A final word on the General Election of 1806 is necessary in order to place it in its true position in the history of British political development. The word shall be given to Cobbett who, if with some exaggeration, sensed that the remarkable contests for Westminster and Middlesex, which convulsed the political life of the capital in the autumn of 1806, were unique, unprecedented and prophetic of the future. Here is *Cobbett's Weekly Political Register* on December 20th:[5]

[1] Cf. *Sir Francis Burdett's [first] Address to the Freeholders of the County of Middlesex*: "I will not distribute, nor consent to the distribution even of a single cockade: nor will I furnish nor consent to the furnishing of a single carriage."

[2] Byng declared on the hustings that Burdett's intemperate language had rendered Mellish the greatest service. But it was Whitbread's opposition that proved most fatal to Burdett.

[3] Cf. *Cobbett's Weekly Political Register*, December 20, 1806, 986, on the "place-hunting, the turn-coat Whigs".

[4] *Ibid.*, November 1st, for an alleged £55,000 a year divided among five Grenvilles.

[5] In column 990. In modern phraseology the uniqueness of the contests of 1806 was that it was no longer mob violence pure and simple on which the "public" had to rely against the pressure of the "factions". The famous Middlesex Elections of 1768–9, fought for Wilkes, and even Burdett's contests of 1802–4 were still mob-contests. In 1806, both in Middlesex and at Westminster,

Those who see in an election no other object than merely that of seating a member in the House of Commons, will, of course, see no good that has been done by the dissolution, in giving rise to the contests in Middlesex and Westminster. But, will such persons, however they may dispute the *good*, pretend to believe, that the sixteen speeches of Sir Francis Burdett, promulgated, as they have been, through every public print in the whole kingdom, together with his several addresses, particularly the last; will they pretend that all these have produced no *effect?* Will they pretend, that all the speeches, all the addresses, all the resolutions, all the numerous publications relative to the Westminster election have had no effect upon the people? Can any man who saw Westminster at the time; who knows anything of Westminster . . . and who considers the force which, in due time, their excellent example must have upon the rest of the kingdom; can any such man say, that the Westminster contest has produced no effect? Look, who will, at the elder Sheridan now, and compare what he is now to what he was previous to the Westminster election; look also at Mr. Whitbread . . . look at the polling of Mr. Byng, and compare it with the great majority that he always heretofore had in Middlesex; look at the whole of those Whigs, who so long deluded the people with the sound of patriotism and disinterestedness; look at them (for they dare not look at you) and then say, whether the elections in Middlesex and Westminster have had *no effect!*

While the country had been engaged in the excitements of a General Election, its external position had very seriously deteriorated. When Parliament was dissolved on October 24th, the Battle of Jena had, of course, already been fought (October 14th) but its full effects were hardly clear and the optimists could still be hopeful that Napoleon would be outnumbered and outfought by the Prusso-Russian combination. Then had followed, in rapid succession, one disastrous piece of news after another—Napoleon's entry into Berlin on October 28th; the surrender of Hohenlohe with large Prussian forces on November 6th; the surrender of Blücher at Lubeck on November 7th; the fall of Magdeburg on November 8th; the Berlin Decree on November 21st; and, finally, Napoleon's entry into Warsaw on December 15th.[1] Ministerial policy had, of course, been completely outdistanced by continental events that had marched at such a pace. Before Lord Morpeth, for example, Ministers' special envoy to Prussia, had been able to

the mob, though still a factor, was a factor of smaller importance than the widespread and thorough electoral organisation undertaken by the "public" against the "placemen" and their allies.

[1] The dates are given as in the Bohn Edition of *Blair's Chronological Tables, Enlarged and Continued.*

reach the Prussian Court for the purpose of composing the Anglo-Prussian quarrel on Hanover and concerting, thereafter, joint measures against France, the Prussian armies were broken and French troops across Morpeth's intended route. Contact with Prussia, as with Russia, had finally to be maintained by the relatively distant and difficult way of the Sound and the Baltic ports—a most unsatisfactory and even dangerous state of affairs, certain to lead to delays and misunderstandings between would-be allies. Then Russian ambitions in Moldavia and Wallachia, ably utilised by the French embassy at Constantinople, were suffered to produce a state of affairs which resulted in a Turkish declaration of war against Russia in December and in Napoleon's apparent readiness, as an "ally" of the Turks, to seize control of the Levant once more. Some of the most questionable decisions of the Grenville Cabinet were taken, early in 1807, when mesmerised by possible French dangers to Sicily, Malta and Egypt, Ministers virtually decided to limit their combative activities, in the Old World, to threatening movements against Constantinople and Alexandria. Those movements, of course, might be, and were, described as a help to the Tsar in his troubles with the Turks and French. But, taken in conjunction with Ministers' expedition against Monte Video and their desire to avoid a further large increase of taxation, during 1807, they infallibly led to a dangerously grudging attitude towards Russo-Prussian requests for help against Napoleon in the really decisive theatres of East Prussia and Poland.

Much of this was, however, in the future when Ministers faced the new Parliament, on December 18, 1806, with a Speech from the Throne in which principal emphasis was laid on their conduct of the late abortive negotiations with Napoleon and on their vain effort to get into touch with Prussia before the latter's disasters.[1] On both these subjects Ministers apparently scented the possibility of dangerous blame being thrown upon them by the Pittites. And, indeed, the Pittites were soon busy criticising Ministers for having been optimistic enough, during the peace negotiations, to allow the Army and Navy to remain virtually unused while Napoleon reorganised Western Europe to his fancy and then fell upon Prussia. There was mock, too, of Ministers' special Mission

[1] *New Annual Register*, 1806, Public Papers, pp. 152–3, for the Speech as read by the Lord Chancellor in the King's absence and after the Commons, first assembled on December 15th, had spent some time being sworn in.

to Prussia, equipped, it was inferred, with instructions, so wide of events, that it was compelled to return before it could even get near its destination. The late Dissolution, advised by Ministers, was also attacked as partisan, unnecessary and dangerous, and Canning, in fact, was ingenious enough in fault-finding to need twenty-six sections for the Address to the Crown he proposed in substitution of that supported by the Ministers.[1] Ample notice had certainly been served on Government that serious trouble might be expected at the first opportunity.

In these circumstances Ministers showed courage in deciding on a domestic policy of some scope. Thus, by agreement, apparently, with Wilberforce and the "Saints", it was resolved to face a storm of opposition and fix as early a date as January 1, 1808 for the enforced cessation of the British Slave Trade. Then, legislation had been decided upon to bring some improvements into the judicial system of Scotland. There were plans, too, for improving the lot of Irish Catholics of which more will be said later, and Whitbread, most important of unofficial Whigs, the more popular because he had preferred to retain his "independence" of place and salary, had been encouraged to turn his attention to the English poor and the possibility of arranging, for them, a system of free education. But the project on which Ministers could apparently rely, most certainly, for popular favour was Lord Henry Petty's *Plan of Finance*, a plan under which Government virtually pledged itself against any considerable increase of war-taxation and yet purported to show how the war might be financed, on this basis, for an almost indefinite number of years, if that should prove necessary. It seemed to be an added beauty of the plan that it provided that all future Loans would be automatically accompanied by appropriate Sinking Funds, and it only omitted to make plain that all its calculations were based on the highly dangerous assumption that the scale of Britain's war effort and expenditure could be safely stabilised at the existing level whatever the danger or the emergency. Yet the pledge against any large increase of taxation, and the apparent certainty that, on such a basis, Britain's resources could no longer be "profusely squandered" on unreliable and unprofitable continental Coalitions, was attractive enough for Cobbett suddenly to abandon

[1] There was apparently sufficient interest in Canning's production for Cobbett to copy it, from the *Courier* of December 22, 1806, into the *Political Register* of January 3, and 10, 1807.

his vendetta against Ministers and insist on hugging them to his bosom instead. Ministers might well consider they had strengthened themselves when Cobbett could hold forth thus:[1]

> . . . there requires no reflection previous to the bestowing of our praise, upon a plan, which, whatever it may finally produce, delivers us, at once, from the apprehension of those additional burthens, which *must* have speedily caused a destruction of the government. If I, for my part, have with more earnestness than most other men, insisted upon the evils attendant upon the system of taxation; if I have, even to the wearying of my readers, repeated the assertion, that it *must stop*, or that a general disinclination to resist the enemy would be the unavoidable consequence . . . if I have, in this way, been distinguished above most other men, I may, surely, be expected to take my full share of the general satisfaction at a plan, in which the ministers solemnly . . . pledge themselves to us, *that there shall be no new taxes for three years next ensuing;* that we shall enjoy three years, three whole years, without any further undermining of our liberties by taking our property from us . . . this measure . . . will make the ministry popular. . . . It will confirm their hold against the intrigues of the secret cabinet. . . .

But within a month from the publication of these praises, Ministers were involved in a fatal quarrel with the Court on the subject of their proposed concessions to Irish Catholics. On their first coming into office in February 1806, Ministers had refrained from provoking an immediate crisis with the Crown and had decided to help the Irish Catholics, to begin with, by administrative rather than by legislative means. Thus, important changes, in a pro-Catholic direction, had been made at Dublin Castle; the pro-Catholic Mr. Ponsonby had been appointed Lord Chancellor of Ireland; and the Duke of Bedford had been sent out as Lord-Lieutenant with a programme of administrative lenity. And though manifestations of agrarian "outrage" had reappeared during the year in the "Thresher" movement, Ministers and the Duke of Bedford had, despite criticism, remained firm in their determination to make no use of the extraordinary powers of an Irish Insurrection Act.[2] This had given the "Pittite" ex-Attorney-General,

[1] *Cobbett's Weekly Political Register*, February 7, 1807.

[2] Cf. *Ibid.*, February 14th, for an Irish correspondent on the "Thresher" troubles: "The dispute has broken out principally in the Western Counties . . . large bodies of men have appeared arrayed and in force. They have marched into different districts, and have exacted provisions, money and arms. . . . Oaths have been administered by them, generally to bind the parties to the refusal of the payment of tithes to any but *resident* clergy; to regulate the dues payable to their own priests; to which sometimes has been added a clause not to obey the

Spencer Perceval, the chance to suggest to the new Parliament the need, in Ireland, for "an extraordinary exertion of the law" and for "an enlargement of the executive power".[1] Presumably he was indicating a readiness to go even beyond the "extraordinary" curfew-proclaiming powers of the 1796 Insurrection Act and to carry Habeas Corpus Suspension also. And though Ministers had no use for Spencer Perceval's suggestions, his way of thinking appears to have done him no harm at Court where he seems to have been one of the first called in when the Crown determined to change the Government. From the Court's point of view he had two principal advantages over Canning and Castlereagh as a Leader of the House of Commons. As a professional lawyer he would presumably bring more technical knowledge to bear on the problems of carrying the King's business through Parliament. And very different from Canning and Castlereagh, he was so far from having committed himself to Catholic Emancipation, even as a distant possibility, that he was probably the most dangerous opponent of the "Catholic claims" in the House.

The attitude that Perceval was prepared to take in regard to the very modest concessions to the Catholics proposed by Ministers, the attitude that found favour at Court, was first notably demonstrated in some Irish Estimates business on February 20, 1807. In their negotiations with Irish Catholics, Ministers, unable to offer very much, had yet consented to add a sum of £5000 to the £8000 already granted annually to the Irish Catholic Seminary, Maynooth College. This Seminary had been founded and endowed in 1795 when Pitt, under Burke's influence, was trying to win Irish Catholic sympathies from the United Irishmen and was most desirous, also, of having aspirants for the Irish priesthood trained, to some extent, under Government auspices instead of, as hitherto, at continental institutions, provided by Catholic charity

Act of Union, and also a sweeping clause to obey the orders of *Captain Thresher*. . . . Proclamations have been posted up . . . addressed '*to the steady friends of liberty*' . . . they contain invitations of too strong a nature, and assertions with regard to *foreign force* which ought not to appear but through proper authority. . . ." See also Howell's *State Trials*, vol. xxx.

[1] *Ibid.*, December 27, 1806, for an angry tirade against Perceval and his associates: "'An *extraordinary exertion of the law*'. 'An *enlargement of the executive power*'. Let us not forget these words. They convey the idea of spies, jails, tortures, and gibbets. Let us bear them in mind; and let us never, in word or deed, shew our disapprobation of the present ministers, without at the same time guarding our hearts against men who come forward as volunteers to offer their services to oppress, to grind, to degrade, to muzzle, and to stifle us. . . .'

and where opinion, in regard to England, was most hostile. But, according to Ministers, Maynooth's existing arrangements could not supply Ireland with the number of priests needed annually, and priests, trained on the Continent, would still have to be drawn on largely unless their plan of extending Maynooth were accepted. Nay, they professed to have evidence proving that Walsh, Irish head of a seminary in Paris, had lately been attempting to induce the Irish students in the relatively friendly atmosphere of Lisbon to transfer to France and that the Irish Catholic bishops had had to use the threat of excommunication to frustrate the plan.[1] Yet, despite the plausibility of Ministers' case, Perceval had twice thought fit to raise the narrow and spiteful "Protestant" opposition which was destined to add him to the roll, first, of George III's Leaders of the Commons, and, ultimately, of his Prime Ministers. In the second speech Perceval made in opposition to the increased Irish estimate for Maynooth, that of March 4th, he even ventured to criticise the policy which, in 1795, had allowed Maynooth to be founded at all. Here is one summary of Perceval's speech which reveals how Maynooth's proposed £13,000 per annum could be worked up as a grave "Protestant" grievance while the immense Protestant plunder of past centuries, which had bestowed churches, churchyards, cathedrals, tithes and, of course, the great bulk of the land and privileges on a Protestant minority, ecclesiastical and lay, that, in some parts, did not number one-twentieth of the population, could be treated as sacrosanct. According to Mr. Perceval, even the original Maynooth plan of 1795 had been mistaken because:[2]

> Had the public money of that time been expended in enlarging the university of Dublin, instead of adopting the policy of a separate institution, a great object would have been obtained, the benefits arising from which would have every day increased. The interests of the protestant university were sacrificed to the advancement of the catholic seminary. Within a few years the professors of the latter institution were doubled: there being, instead of the nine original professors, now eighteen. In the university of Dublin, provision was

[1] Cf. *Cobbett's Parliamentary Debates*, March 4, 1807, for Grey, Viscount Howick winding up the debate and having to answer not only Perceval but two very important "independents", Wilberforce, spokesman for the Evangelical opposition to the State "endowment" of Romanism, and Bankes who represented the average M.P. of conscience a good deal better than Wilberforce.

[2] *Annual Register*, 1807, History, p. 86. This speech of Perceval's was made at the Report stage of the Irish Estimates. Perceval's previous speech on the subject had been made on February 20th.

made for only 100 persons, including the fellows, senior and junior scholars and sizers: whilst the public were called on to defray the expenses of 200 Roman-catholic professors and students in the college of Maynooth, a class of subjects who, in their religious tenets, withheld from their lawful sovereign the admission of his supremacy. As to the place of education, whether abroad or at home, it did not seem to Mr. Perceval a matter of much consequence. The true and strong source of danger and hostility lay in the principles in which the Roman-catholics were educated. There seemed to Mr. Perceval a great mystery about the Maynooth institution. There was nothing like a visitorial inspection, no inquiry into the doctrine instilled and discipline exercised over a number of youth educated, if not in aversion, at least in opposition and hostility to the principles of the protestant establishment.

On March 5th, the day after Perceval's second speech against increased provision for Maynooth, Grey (Viscount Howick) introduced into the Commons his fateful Bill to provide some further "relief" for the Irish Catholics. Originally Ministers had limited their immediate ambitions to an alteration of the law which would have permitted Irish Catholic officers, holding commissions under the Irish Catholic Relief Act of 1793, to exercise their functions in Britain also, despite the provisions of the Test Act.[1] But so comparatively minute a concession was of a nature to exasperate rather than conciliate the Irish Catholics, and, ultimately, Ministers in an attempt to head off a demand for complete "emancipation", allowed themselves to be committed to legislation which would, for the first time, have allowed Catholics to rise to the rank of Generals on the Staff.[2]

Grey always declared that the plan had been laid before the King and that permission had been received to proceed. Doubtless an impression had been made on the King by the argument Grey subsequently used in Parliament, the argument that "indulgences" to the Irish Catholic community would greatly increase the flow of Irish recruits to the Regular Army. But the King had not apparently understood from the interview that the suggested "indulgences" would entail the possibility of Catholic

[1] *Diary and Correspondence of Charles Abbot, Lord Colchester*, ii, 92 et seq., shews that Sidmouth had consented to go as far as this with the rest of the Cabinet and claimed the credit for having won the consent of the King.

[2] For the Irish Catholic attitude see *Sketch of a Speech delivered by John Keogh at a meeting of the Catholics of Dublin . . . January 24, 1807; and published at the desire of a subsequent meeting held the 7th of February*. Catholics were not yet able to qualify even for such relatively trifling distinctions as Justiceships of the Peace.

Generals on the Staff,[1] and directly his entourage explained matters to him in this sense he determined to put a stop to his Ministers' activities, as tending to a violation of the engagements towards the Church which he considered himself to have taken in his Coronation Oath. The Ministers were refused permission to continue with the "extended Catholic" Bill, and they countered by determining to bring in no Catholic Bill at all. Moreover, they drew up a Cabinet Minute which claimed for them the right, when withdrawing the Bill, to assert their continued opinion of its merits and to repeat their views when speaking, in Parliament, on the far-reaching Petition that might now be expected from the chagrined Catholics. Finally, they reserved to themselves the right of putting again before the King, from time to time, whatever measures the state of Ireland might seem to require.[2] The King objected, it would appear, to the whole Minute, but his strongest feeling was excited against the reservation by which Ministers left themselves free to reopen the Catholic question whenever they thought fit. When Ministers declined to withdraw this part of the Minute and to offer the King, instead, a written pledge never to put the abandoned Bill or anything similar before him again,[3] they were promptly informed of the monarch's intention to "look out for other Ministers".

The King would hardly have been advised to venture a step of this fateful kind unless he had received assurances of support beforehand from Ministers' opponents. A possibly decisive letter from the Duke of Portland, dated March 12th and acknowledged on March 13th, deserves some quotation.

"Your Majesty will probably anticipate," wrote Portland,[4] "the subject on which I cannot but express my anxiety. . . .

[1] Not to mention Catholic naval officers.

[2] Cf. *Cobbett's Parliamentary Debates*, for the account given by Grey (Viscount Howick) on March 26th after he had left office.

[3] They could claim, of course, that it would be a breach of their duty to ignore, for the whole future of the reign, all the Irish and international dangers which had caused them so often, during the past year, to discuss the problem of Irish Catholic regiments from every possible angle (see Fortescue MSS., viii, 253, 257–8, 261, 270, 282, 328–9, 461, 481, 486–8). They had desired, for example, to have them as the garrison force in Buenos Aires, after its temporary conquest, and to use them in all Catholic lands where the problem of regimental Catholic worship would make no special difficulties. Needless to say, Catholic regiments would have been ideal for the Peninsular War which was approaching faster than anyone guessed at the time.

[4] *Diaries and Correspondence of the first Earl of Malmesbury*, iv, 360–2, gives the letter in full.

"It is the Bill just proposed by Lord Howick, granting indulgences to the Catholics; a measure, that should any peculiarity of circumstances have induced your Majesty to acquiesce in, I should still think that by following the dictates of my own conscience and voting against it, I should not offend your Majesty.

"... Should I be wrong, and your Majesty has not given your consent to the measure in its present shape, I have little apprehension in giving it as my opinion that it might ultimately be defeated in its progress, though not I fear till it comes into the House of Lords; but, for this purpose, I must fairly state to your Majesty, that your wishes must be distinctly known, and that your present Ministers should not have any pretext for equivocating....

"... it would be highly necessary and advantageous that the public should know the necessity to which your Majesty was driven of taking the conduct of your affairs out of the hands of those who now administer them; that for this purpose your Majesty should send for Lord Grenville, and state to him distinctly, that ... you had never consented to the measure proposed by Lord Howick, and that, consistently with the opinion your Majesty had uniformly expressed, it never could or would have your Royal assent. It would then remain with Lord Grenville and his colleagues to take their part; possibly they might give way and still remain your Majesty's Ministers; but, should they refuse ... the necessity of employing other persons would be obvious to the whole world....

"Under such circumstances I cannot but believe ... that the nation as well as individuals will come forward in support of the established laws of the realm, and that persons will be found able to carry on your Majesty's business with talents and abilities equal to those of your present Ministers. If your Majesty should suppose that in the forming of such an Administration, I can offer your Majesty any services, I am devoted to your Majesty's commands....

This letter explains much of how it came about that the Grenville Government was replaced, mainly from ex-Ministers, on March 24th. The Duke of Portland, as the Whig ex-Premier of 1783, had been of great assistance to the Court ever since he had broken from Fox on the French Revolution and had consented to take office from Pitt, in 1794, from Addington in 1801 and from Pitt again in 1804. After Pitt's death, some of the old ambition to force his way back to the Prime Ministership, an ambition which had once induced him to defer repeatedly the breach with Fox, appears to have been stirred up in him again, and he could hardly have been ignorant that two of the "old hands", whose views were much regarded at Court, the Lords Malmesbury and Melville, considered his name the safest to put at the head of any

combination for replacing the erring Ministry of "innovation". It was, of course, understood that, old and ailing as he was, he could hardly be an "efficient Minister" but Eldon as Lord Chancellor and Hawkesbury as Home Secretary were prepared to bear the real burden of leadership in the Lords, and, in the Commons, Perceval as Chancellor of the Exchequer, Canning as Foreign Secretary and Castlereagh as War Secretary seemed likely to make a reasonably strong Cabinet team. Some of those who planned the new Government had been in hopes of giving it additional strength, against its opponents, by leading the Addingtonian "influence" straight out of the Grenville camp into that of the "Pittites".[1] But private rivalries and resentments made this less easy to achieve than the sanguine had hoped, and, for some time to come, Sidmouth's little band was to practise an "independence" of "Government" which occasionally made difficulties for the Portland Administration.[2]

[1] Cf. Horace Twiss, *Life of Lord Chancellor Eldon* (ed. 1846), i, 372, for Eldon: "I am most sincerely hurt that Lord Sidmouth is not among us. My earnest wish and entreaty has been, that he should—and many others have wished it. . . ."

[2] *Ibid.*, for a Melville and Canning veto upon Sidmouth. Melville resented bitterly the Addingtonian attitude towards him when charged with peculation, and Canning knew that Sidmouth had done his best to make high official rank for him impossible.

CHAPTER XIII

THE PORTLAND GOVERNMENT

"There existed in the country a description of persons increasing with the weakness of the country—persons unconnected with any party in parliament, but whose object was to decry parliament altogether. The leaders taught, and the followers believed, that parliament disregarded the interests of their constituents. This was a danger daily augmenting: the only way of meeting it was, by a conduct that should not only be free from guilt, but also free from suspicion: by adopting measures that should show unequivocally the disposition of parliament to correct public abuses, and to reduce public expenditure. For this purpose it was most desirable, that the principle of this [Offices in Reversion] bill should be recognised by Parliament. It would indeed be most unfortunate, if the great aristocracy . . . were so much misled, as to refuse to make this recognition. That misfortune would be much increased, if certain illustrious personages, to whose splendour the house of commons had lately contributed so largely, should be so misguided as to take part against a measure not directed against the prerogative of the crown but simply having in view the methodising, the regulating, and, if possible, the diminution of the public expenditure. It had been supposed, that because the bill had not much intrinsic importance . . . the public was but little interested in its fate. The contrary was the case. This circumstance rendered the rejection of it more odious. . . . We had witnessed prodigious revolutions. . . . He wished that those persons who were most deeply interested, would examine the history of those awful changes . . . he must say that if any one line of conduct was more favourable than another to the views of those who were the advocates of revolution, it was precisely that line of conduct which had lately been adopted by the upper house of parliament. Adverting to the objections to the bill, which had so suddenly flashed upon the mind of the right hon. gentleman opposite [Perceval], he observed that the circumstance suggested to his mind very serious reflections on the nature of the influence under which the right hon. gentleman and his coadjutors acted—an influence as destructive to their own dignity, as it was to the interests of the people. They were ministers and no ministers; they were subject to be thwarted by a secret but irresponsible power. They had the title without having the privileges of office. He professed a

respect for the character of some of the ministers, and was surprised how those to whom he alluded (looking at Mr. Canning) could possibly so far demean themselves as to submit so closely to that influence.... Among the many strong objections to the present ministers as a body, there was this serious one, that they had contributed, in an almost unprecedented degree, to the increase of the power of the secret faction; and they now reaped the fruits of their conduct in the degradation of office. He was no friend to the present administration; but such as it was, while it did last, he wished it to be invested with the power that belonged to it, and that it should not be degraded by a subjection to court influence."

J. W. Ward, M.P. makes a much-noted attack on the royal dukes, March 28, 1808.

THE sort of palace revolution by which the ejection of the Grenville Government had been accomplished was, obviously, not of the kind that could be undertaken in Britain without the certainty of the most serious Parliamentary challenge. The ejected Ministers had presided over the last elections, not five months back, and had considerably strengthened their position. And though many "independent" members normally regarded it as their function to support whoever were the King's Ministers, in the necessary day-to-day work of Parliament, a considerable number appear to have been shocked both by the unabashed eagerness of Pittite careerists to climb back into office at the first opportunity, and by the questionable partisanship displayed in Court circles—on this occasion, by the royal Duke of Cumberland even more than by his elder brother, the Duke of York.[1] The touch of hypocrisy which allowed a man of the private habits of the Duke of Cumberland to come forward as a strenuous vindicator of "the national religion", the recollection that Pitt himself, the vaunted paragon of the new Ministers, had resigned in 1801 rather than allow the King to veto a much more far-reaching pro-Catholic policy than that proposed in 1807, only served to make the average "independent member" more doubtful about the change of Government. On March 24th, the day before the Portland Ministry was definitely installed, it was given a sharp premonitory sample of the ordeal awaiting it. The out-going Cabinet had arranged, on February 10th, for a Select Committee on Finance to be set up, and this Committee, sure of the hearty support of the "independents" and the "public", had already projected some probing into the unnecessary expense imposed upon the "public" by various types of place and sinecure, whose

[1] Romilly in his *Parliamentary Diary* noted under March 26th that: "The Duke of Cumberland placed himself at the head of this bench [of the new Ministers in the Lords], probably to proclaim to the world, that he is the person who has brought about the change of administration." Horner (*Memoirs* under April 7th) blamed the Pittites' impatience for power, the King's impatience to "get rid of the reformers and abolitionists," and "perhaps the Duke of York's [impatience] to stop the reformation of barrack abuses". And, according to Horner, the result would be that "all the prejudices that have been skulking out of sight will be advanced into broad day, avowed in Parlament, and acted upon in the cabinet; it will be the language of the treasury .... that the poor would be made worse subjects, and less comfortable to themselves, by letting them learn to read; the principles of toleration will be brought into question, and we shall have eternal chimes upon the wisdom of our ancestors and the dangers of innovation."

duties were either performed by deputy or were only nominal. Among such types of place and sinecure, there were particular objections to those granted "for life" or "in reversion" as part of a politician's bargain with the Crown, and now it was learnt that Perceval had so successfully represented the sacrifice he was making in abandoning the Bar for a challenged Leadership of the Commons that he had been offered the Chancellorship of the Duchy of Lancaster for life as well as the salary and emoluments of the Chancellorship of the Exchequer. There were angry recriminations in the Commons, in which it was pointed out, on the one side, that Perceval was already a "reversioner" to a very valuable place held by his brother, Lord Arden, and in which it was retorted, from the other, both that the Rockingham Whigs had, in 1782, secured a life-grant of the Duchy for a "patriot" in more questionable circumstances than the present and that, in any case, the acquisition of the Duchy would still leave the Percevals immeasurably behind the Grenvilles in sinecure-accumulation.[1] Next day, the very first day in office of the new Government, the House of Commons, despite a speech from Perceval, characteristically spiteful against Grenville and the Whigs, carried, by 208 votes against 115, a motion praying the King not to grant, for life, any place, usually granted during pleasure.[2] Perceval had already anticipated the inevitable and claimed the merit of having himself gone to the Palace to decline, "for the present," the Duchy for life.

Perceval's opening setback was not altogether harmful to the prospects of the new Government. Having administered a smart rebuff to a proposed "job" on behalf of the incoming Ministers, quite a number of "independents" could be relied on to see no further reason for playing the party game of the outgoing Ministers. It was well for Perceval that this was so, since the outgoing Government's constitutional case, as presented in both Houses on March 26th, was a strong one. Quite apart from the question whether Howick had or had not had sufficient ground to assume that the King had understood the full purport of the Catholic proposals, there was really the more vital question whether the King had had the right to demand of Ministers the pledge never again to bring before him the Catholic question, whatever might

[1] Cf. *Cobbett's Parliamentary Debates*, March 24, 1807.
[2] *Ibid.*, March 25, 1807.

be the circumstances. There was a strong case for arguing that such a pledge, even if given by Pitt, first, and the new Ministers afterwards, was a violation of the Privy Councillor's oath. Quite a number of "independent" members must have resolved to give the King, rather than the Grenville Ministry, the benefit of the doubt to produce the divisions of April 9th and April 16th when the issue was twice put to the vote in the Commons. The vote of April 9th gave the new Ministers a majority of 258 against 226, and on April 16th their majority was 244 against 198.[1] These figures, however, offered Perceval, in those days, no sufficient security for the conduct of contentious Bills through all the difficult forms of Parliament, and on April 27th, it was announced that Parliament was to be dissolved in order to allow the King to "recur to the sense of his people".

The new Ministers were again taking a questionable course when advising the Dissolution of a Parliament not five months old but apparently they already saw reason to expect large changes in their favour from the new elections. Certainly, even among independent, Dissenter voters, having little to expect or to hope from the Court, much useful support was won away from ex-Ministers on the ground that their Irish proposals would have raised "Popery" to a most dangerous degree of power and influence.[2] And as for those "independent" voters, radical enough to read Cobbett, they hardly received sufficient guidance from the *Political Register* on what was the Whigs' constitutional grievance against the Court. Cobbett had spent so much of his time, under the Grenville Ministry, in protesting against its alleged timidity and selfishness, he spent so much of his energy, after its fall, in proclaiming the enormity of Grenville's sinecurism and rejoicing over the end of "place" for Perry of the Whig *Morning Chronicle*, that some of his

[1] Cf. *Morning Chronicle*, April 22, 1807, for the suggestion that Ministers' majority was only obtained by the support of some, who dreaded the expense of securing re-election if Ministers were forced to dissolve Parliament. To have to spend two or three thousand pounds twice over in the course of six months—the last Elections were in November 1806—was, of course, no joke even for a wealthy man.

[2] Cf. The Whig *Morning Chronicle*, April 13, 1807, for a parody on the Westminster "Puppet Show". "The theatre", it recounts, "is in the form of a *chapel*, dimly illuminated by a number of transparencies, the principal of which represent the burning of heretics, assassination, massacres, a conversation between the *pope* and the *devil*, and other subjects calculated to bring to the recollection of the spectator, those dark ages when mumming and puppet-shows were in high repute. The stage, as usual on such occasions, is furnished with a semi-curtain to conceal those managers, performers, or scene-shifters, who either wish to be invisible or are ashamed to be seen. . . ."

readers may well have overlooked the fact that ex-Ministers did, after all, stand for more tolerant treatment of the Catholics and less scope for the arbitrary power of the Crown. Cobbett himself took a large personal share in the defeat of so prominent an ex-Minister as Sheridan at a Westminster election that was again the talk of the country. But he could claim to have helped to Parliament two who had firmly pledged themselves to fight all manner of peculation, corruption and sinecurism, Sir Francis Burdett and the young naval adventurer, Lord Cochrane.[1]

One important attempt was, indeed, made to prevent the separation of the Whigs from the "people" whether on the Popery issue, raised from the one side, or that of over-fondness for sinecures, raised from the other. Whitbread had made himself a considerable reputation by the great effort he had given to the exposure of Lord Melville's financial malpractices; he had increased it by declining all office or reward when Fox came to power; and he had since enlarged it still further by working hard on an important Bill intended to reform and humanise the Poor Law by making it provide some free education and improved housing for labouring families. His election address at Bedford was very widely quoted and it sometimes became a rallying-cry against those organising "Loyal Addresses" of thanks to the King for having asserted his just prerogatives, resisted an "aristocratical combination", safeguarded the "national religion" and dismissed the late Ministers. Whitbread's address ran thus:[2]

The King's ministers have rashly advised his Majesty to dissolve the Parliament which was first assembled for the dispatch of business on the 15th of December last; its duration has been short, but its

[1] *Annual Register*, 1807, History, p. 235–6, has a surprisingly approving note: "Sir Francis Burdett . . . Lord Cochrane became popular by disclaiming all attachment to all parties and factions, and declaring their wishes to overturn abuses, and nothing but abuses; to look only to the measures of men, and not their persons and connections. Their election for Westminster was a complete triumph over aristocratical combination and all factions and parties whatever. These two men were not unworthy of being so honourably and so singularly distinguished. The matured talents and virtues of Sir Francis Burdett. . . . The blooming virtues of Lord Cochrane. . . ."

[2] This Address "*To the Worthy and Independent Electors of the Borough of Bedford*" was immediately recognised by Cobbett as a great possible help to ex-Ministers' cause in Westminster and, though only dated April 28th, was already being rebutted in the *Political Register* for May 2nd. The Address of Grey (Viscount Howick) "*To the Gentlemen, Clergy, and Freeholders of the County of Northumberland*" bears strong marks of having been adapted from Whitbread's, and both Addresses were still thought worth quoting in full in a Parliamentary History of 1846, *Crosby's Parliamentary Record.*

career has been memorable. The assiduity with which all public business has been dispatched is without precedent. . . . In consequence of judicious arrangements, the election petitions, which have usually occupied the time and attention of the House of Commons during two or three years, would all have been decided in the course of one session. After wars so protracted and expensive . . . a Plan of Finance was devised and adopted, notwithstanding the opposition of the persons now in power, adequate to the exigencies of the state, without imposing any fresh burthens upon the people. A committee was appointed to controul and reduce the public expenditure. . . . A bill was brought in under the sanction of that committee for prohibiting the grant of places in reversion. A plan for the reformation and bettering the condition of the labouring classes of society was under consideration. Measures for the improvement of the Courts of Justice in Scotland were in progress through the Lords. The slave trade, after a struggle of twenty years, was abolished. At the moment the Commons were precipitately summoned . . . for the Prorogation of the Parliament, preparatory to its dissolution, there was actually at their bar a special report from the committee above-mentioned, stating the discovery of some gross abuses in the department of the Paymaster-General, which was thereby stopped. The bill to prohibit the grant of places in reversion is lost. More than one hundred private bills carried to advanced stages, at great expense to the parties interested in them, drop, and the improvement of the country is impeded. At the same moment the Scotch judges were in attendance in the House of Lords, with their answers to certain questions . . . for which purpose they had been expressly called to London, to the interruption of the ordinary duties of their important offices. The usual act of appropriation of the funds voted by Parliament has not been passed. Under these circumstances the King has been advised to dissolve the Parliament, and . . . the assertion is made, that no material interruption in the public business will take place. . . . It is proposed to inculcate a spirit of union, harmony and good-will . . . when at the same time the only appearances of discord have been excited by the attempt of one of his majesty's ministers to sow the seeds of religious animosity in the neighbouring county of Northampton. . . .

Thanks to the real strength of their case and the understandable qualms of many "independents", ex-Ministers were hardly routed to the extent that had, at one time, seemed possible.[1] Government influence had certainly been much used in

[1] Cf. *Annual Register*, 1807, History, p. 236, for the circular letter confidently sent out before the meeting of Parliament by the ex-Leader of the Commons, Grey, Viscount Howick, and the "most magnificent" dinner at Willis's, partaken of by 188 members of both Houses, to pledge their Opposition faith. Yet Howick had been so hard pressed on "Popery" that he had decided to abandon the membership for Northumberland, held since 1785, and take refuge at Appleby.

Ireland;[1] in Britain high hopes had been raised among the Volunteer organisations who deemed themselves injured and insulted by Windham's cheese-paring treatment and low estimate of their worth;[2] and, finally, according to rumour, all purchasable seats had early been snatched out of the reach of Opposition by an offer of unprecedented prices, made possible by the heavy flow of Royal money from the Privy Purse.[3] All these things certainly gave Ministers an invincible majority,[4] but their opponents were so far from overwhelmed that they showed considerable fight during the eight busy weeks that elapsed between the opening of the new Parliament on June 22nd and the close of its first Session on August 14th. From the party point of view there was plenty of ground for dispute, and it might be well to set down the principal subjects of contention. Opposition complained bitterly of the Dissolution advised by Ministers and their way of conducting the subsequent elections. It quarrelled with Ministers' resolve to alter Windham's Army measures, and especially with their determination to recruit "for life" once more, despite Windham's contention that to obtain even part of the Army on this degrading basis would ruin all his plans for raising the social status of the soldier and the attractiveness of the military career to decent young men. Opposition was irritated, too, by a partial abandonment of the Finance Plan and angrily contested Ministers' determination to pass a new Irish Insurrection Act without any obvious or proven need for the great curtailments of liberty which it made possible.[5]

[1] Cf. *Cobbett's Weekly Political Register*, July 18th, quoting Howick in Parliament on June 26th: "With respect to the influence of the crown, it had been exercised during the last election, in a most unexampled manner. In this country to a great degree, but in the *sister* kingdom most unblushingly, both in temptation and threats."

[2] *Ibid.*, for the information that had been sent out "that it was intended . . . to restore their pay to such volunteers as came in after a certain period, and also *to re-appoint the Inspecting Field Officers*".

[3] Cf. Harriet Martineau's *History of England, 1800–1815* (Bohn ed., p. 253–4): "Mr. Tierney, who managed the business of buying seats for the friends of the Grenville Ministry, could get none. £6,000 were given for seats, without any stipulation as to the length of the parliament though the last had existed only four months. The new Ministry had bought up all the seats that were to be had, and at any prices. It was said and believed that the King had advanced a very large sum out of his privy purse, for the purpose."

[4] The Address was carried in the Commons by 350 against 155 and, in the Lords, by 160 against 67 (June 26th).

[5] Cf. *Cobbett's Weekly Political Register*, August 1, 1807, for Cobbett temporarily sobered by "this bill, this fearful bill" into admiring even Sheridan's opposition. Sheridan had particularly reprobated the "insulting majorities" that had rejected "so many efforts at modification, moved by most respectable characters, and supported by the most unanswerable arguments".

But more provoking, perhaps, to Opposition politicians than Ministers' departure from their policies, was the tone taken in the Commons by the three triumphant Cabinet representatives there. Canning had built his career on sneering and mockery, and now his example was not without effect on his colleagues. Even Castlereagh, as Secretary for War, attempted some sarcasm at Windham's expense, and Perceval always appeared ready to meet Opposition allegations of jobbery with counter-charges that were the more irritating because felt to be forced and unfair. Thus, in the heated scenes in the Commons when Perceval insisted on a remodelling of the Committee of Finance appointed in ex-Ministers' days, he met their charges that he was attempting to screen much jobbery which was on the point of being exposed, by spiteful counter-charges that need quotation if some of the atmosphere of the politics of 1807 is to be suggested. By the standards of the day, ex-Ministers had been more financially scrupulous than most. Yet Perceval affected almost the "Jacobin" suspiciousness of a Cobbett or Burdett in regard to ex-Ministers' use of the patronage when in power.

"The late ministers," said Perceval,[1] "had expressed themselves . . . very much averse to the grant of places in reversion; there was, however, one instance to which attention had been called, of their having, a short time before they went out of office, appointed to offices in reversion of a most extraordinary nature; he alluded to the appointment of *a Collector and Surveyor of Customs in the port of Buenos Ayres, a place not then in the possession of his Majesty*. These were reversionary grants to take place upon an uncertain contingency, and made by those gentlemen who appeared to be so nice on this subject. He had on a former occasion stated, without giving any opinion upon the propriety of appointing such officers, the nomination of 300 *Surveyors of Taxes*. The nomination was founded on a representation from the Commissioners of Taxes, made in March 1806, but the appointment could not take place till the business was submitted to Parliament. When the dissolution took place in October, without any sanction of parliament . . . for these appointments, the persons were designated to the offices, in the way the noble lord had said on a former night: *Members of Parliament* waited on the Minister, *they were received civilly, and the promises made* . . . the hon. gentlemen opposite, when they lost the power of performance, were compelled to the condoling letters which he had before alluded to. . . . Another appointment made by the late administration, was that of Gazette Writer created by patent for Scotland,

[1] Quoted from *Cobbett's Weekly Political Register*, July 18th, which obligingly italicised for its readers what it considered the most revealing phrases.

with a salary of £300 per annum. This office had been before divided between the Editors of three Newspapers . . . the business of the office was performed by these three persons, *without any expense to the public, though they made a profit of £200 a year by the publications in their newspapers.* He should not dwell in detail upon all the acts of the late ministers, but he confessed himself at a loss to understand what they could mean by the appointment of *a Professor of Medical Jurisprudence.* . . . There had also been *three new Sheriffs* appointed in Scotland, with salaries *of between £250 and £300* a year, on a division of counties, *where the duties were before executed as in one Shrievalty.* . . . Another appointment, which was equally censurable, was the grant of a pension, *during pleasure,* of £400 a year, *to a civil and criminal Judge in Scotland.* . . .

Perceval had clearly done his best to get up a catalogue which might be made to sound a good deal worse than it really was, a catalogue with some, at least, of the scandalous interest that would have attached to the list, vainly demanded by the "Jacobins", of M.P.s, who, directly or through relatives, lived on the "Public money".[1]

But provoking and unscrupulous as Perceval's speaking must have seemed to Opposition, Canning normally awoke greater antagonisms. Sometimes, of course, the Foreign Secretary was made to pay dear for the facile jeers which produced "loud laughter" on his own side of the House, as when, having had the questionable taste to try and improve on Perceval's blackening of the Whig patronage record, Opposition forced him to confess that both he and his two sisters were on the Pension List in consideration of his services as Foreign Under-Secretary between 1796 and 1801. He would doubtless have done better not to have exposed himself to such crushing treatment of this confession as Cobbett's:[2] "Had the receiving of two thousands a year, for some years, from the public, disqualified him for labour? What was he *before?* Had he lost anything by being Under-Secretary of State? Why, then, are *we* to work for the maintenance of his sisters?" But, at the Foreign Office, Canning was in contact with the most inept part of ex-Ministers' work and never found it possible to

[1] Cf. *Cobbett's Parliamentary Debates* (Commons, July 7th), for the proceedings on Lord Cochrane's motion for the appointment of a committee to inquire into, and to ascertain, the number and amount of the emolument of all places, offices, posts, sinecures, pensions, and fees, enjoyed by members of the present House of Commons, or their wives, children, and other relations, and also of all reversions held by them . . . and of everything whatever, yielding profit to them . . . and arising from taxes, or impositions of any sort upon the people.

[2] *Cobbett's Weekly Political Register,* July 18, 1807.

refrain from scoffing. Ex-Ministers had certainly been most unhappy in their handling of the Tsar for, not only had both British attempts to aid him on his Turkish flank, by operations at the Straits and in Egypt, proved to be fiascos but ex-Ministers, committed also to an ambitious South American plan, had considered their three enterprises as ample justification for inactivity in the Baltic. Yet it had been the Baltic, which had proved the vital theatre during the early winter months of 1807, and if the excellent Russo-Prussian fighting at Eylau, in February, had been backed by determined British action, the early summer might have seen something very different from the Prussian surrenders at Danzig and Königsberg and the heavy Russian defeat at Friedland.[1] But, in Canning's view, ex-Ministers had reached their most dangerous height of ineptitude when, in further pursuance of their ambition to show "economy" in the conduct of the war, they had declined to find adequate financial aid for sorely-stricken Prussia and had mortally insulted the Tsar.[2]

It was certainly true that the angry Tsar attributed the bloody defeat of Friedland to British selfishness and ingratitude. And when Napoleon, in full contrast, apparently, to the greedy islanders, set himself to flatter the Tsar, he was able to secure those strange Tilsit interviews which culminated in the astounding Treaty of Tilsit on July 9th.[3] With Russia, henceforward, Napoleon's friend, and a greatly reduced Prussia his helpless dependant, the peril to Britain, from Napoleon, seemed to grow graver than ever before. Inevitably, the cause of Alexander's *volte-face* became the subject of bitter recrimination in British politics, and, inevitably also, the recriminations of the politicians were, after Parliament's prorogation on August 14th, long

[1] Cf. *Ibid.*, April 25, 1807, for the high hopes that had reigned when Napoleon had seemed in a dangerous position in the interior of Poland: "The newspapers are exulting at his embarrassments; they are anticipating his reverses and his final overthrow. . . . They have, at any time these six months, been telling us, that the Germans were ready to rise upon the French and cut their throats, the moment they should be defeated by the Russians, and compelled to retreat."

[2] The Tsar had asked for a loan of six millions but the Ministers had preferred to give him an outright subsidy of about one-twelfth of what he had requested as a loan. Prussia had been treated with even greater "economy".

[3] Cf. *Ibid.*, August 8th which gives the Franco-Prussian Treaty in full as signed on July 9th and ratified on July 12th. It makes no mention naturally of the "secret articles" negotiated between Napoleon and Alexander at Tilsit though it did give the territory which Russia was to take, from ex-Prussian areas in Poland, in order to obtain more "natural boundaries" with the newly-created Grand Duchy of Warsaw.

re-echoed in the Press. Nor could ex-Ministers have been greatly helped by the line followed by some who most vigorously combated Administration's contention that the Tsar had gone over to Napoleon because of the non-provision of vigorous and generous assistance by the Grenville Government. It might be a "popular" Cobbettite line outside Parliament, but it was hardly a responsible one within, to argue that Grenville's mistake had been, not in providing insufficiently for continental operations, but in wasting any money or effort at all on the unreliable or helpless potentates of the Continent. That Cobbett should blame even Fox's desire to recover Hanover and should almost gloat over the aggravated Irish troubles that the "no-popery heroes" might expect after Tilsit, only makes it clearer why Howick, ex-Ministers' leader in the Commons, always professed that he thoroughly disliked the aid that was occasionally furnished him by Opposition extremists.[1] But Cobbett shall be allowed to speak, on the Tilsit controversy, for himself:[2]

> Nothing dismayed, however, the no-popery heroes and their partisans continue to send forth their accusations against the late ministers. . . . The two errors which the late ministry committed, with regard to the continent, were, their demand of Hanover, which, observe, drove Prussia into a quarrel with France, and their remittance of £80,000 to Prussia. They must, one would think, have been morally certain that no efforts of ours could save either Prussia or Russia. From the first to the last, there was no probability, that Prussia would not be subdued. With my scanty means of information, I was in possession of knowledge, upon which I would have betted a thousand to one, that neither the Prussians nor the Russians made head against the French for a single day. The late ministers must have been acquainted with the state of things; and, if they had, nevertheless, granted subsidies, and sent out expeditions to the Baltic, would they not have deserved the execrations of the country? If we could have sent out 40,000 men, it would have been sending them to certain defeat and disgrace. To pretend, that the overthrow of the Russian and Prussian armies could have been prevented by us, is, perhaps, the most shameful instance of hypocrisy that was ever witnessed, even on the part of no-popery,

[1] Cf. *Cobbett's Parliamentary Debates*, June 30th, for Howick speaking for Burdett's addition to the Committee of Finance "although he could assure the house there was no gentleman . . . more adverse to the general conduct of that person than he was—although no man was more the subject of that person's attack and that of the party, if such they could be called, who had acted with him". Howick claimed to be asking for a seat, for Burdett, on principle and because Burdett was the most notorious critic of "public abuses".

[2] *Cobbett's Weekly Political Register*, August 8, 1807.

or of Mr. Hypocrisy Perceval. . . . For the purposes of party even the Foreign Secretary has accused his predecessors, that is to say, *his Majesty's government*, of want of faith towards the Emperor of Russia.

A surprising new turn was soon given to party controversy in Britain by the news that a powerful British force had appeared off Copenhagen, in mid-August, with a demand for the deposit of the Danish Fleet in British hands for the duration of the war. For fear of a French occupation of Holstein, the Danish Government had already once crossed the plans of the new British Ministers and had prevented a last-minute expedition from utilising "Danish waters" and taking aid, into the Baltic, for Britain's allies. Now Ministers, convinced from secret intelligence that the same Danish fear for Holstein was about to be made use of in order to force Denmark into the Franco-Russian camp, determined that they would take time by the forelock and remove the Danish fleet from all possibility of falling into Napoleon's hands. By September 7th, after considerable bloodshed, the British expedition had achieved its purpose and was preparing to sail home, with the Danish fleet and naval stores in custody. Despite the cruel blow that had thus been inflicted on a neutral State, which had desired nothing but to be left alone, the first British sentiments on the receipt of the Copenhagen intelligence tended to be pleasurable. After all the relative helplessness lately shown before the unrelenting march of military events on the Continent; after all the uneasy suspicions lately felt that plots were hatching, both in America and Europe,[1] against British sea-power, such a decisive reassertion of naval strength as had been enacted at Copenhagen tended, at first sight, to elate even a Cobbett.[2]

Elation, of course, could hardly continue after fuller realisation came, with the Danish declaration of war, of the unmerited suffering that had been inflicted, and of the awkward consequences now certain at the Baltic entrances and in Norway. Elation proved

[1] The newspapers—the *Courier*, *Times*, *Morning Chronicle*, etc.—will be found, for the last five months of 1807, to carry much material on the possible consequences of American resentment of the British claim to search American ships for British naval deserters, a resentment increased by the unfortunate result of the once-famous affray between the British *Leopard* and the American *Chesapeake*. A strong American party, not merely wished well to Napoleon, but professed to be ready, if a Non-Intercourse Act would not bring Britain to reason, to declare war and fight.

[2] Cf. *Cobbett's Weekly Political Register*, September 19, 1807, for Cobbett's zestful article, "The Danish War".

even more impossible when Britain's treatment of Denmark became the Tsar's main justification for breaking completely with London.[1] And once that breach had taken place, the Tsar was no longer in a position to oppose the French occupation of Portugal or the expulsion of its dynasty as too Anglophil. He himself was, indeed, finally tempted to turn on the King of Sweden for refusal to abandon the British alliance. And engaged, as he soon was, in overrunning his neighbour's Grand Duchy of Finland and in removing the Swedish flag from too near a proximity to St. Petersburg, Alexander proved completely unable to prevent Napoleon's treacherous deposition of the Spanish Bourbons in the spring of 1808.[2]

Meanwhile, in a Parliamentary Session begun on January 21, 1808, there had, of course, been the bitterest debating on the dangerous position of Britain's foreign affairs. According to Opposition, the attack upon Copenhagen had been a piece of the most unjustifiable violence, and Ministers had never produced the so-called information on which they had reached their conclusion that the Tsar was committed to a Franco-Russian seizure of the Danish Fleet. Opposition read the Tsar's conduct at Tilsit altogether differently and affirmed that he negotiated because of pressing military difficulties and had obtained exceptionally good terms by proffering to Napoleon his willingness to act as mediator between Napoleon and Britain. Even Ministers, it was claimed, had not ventured on an outright rejection of the offer that had come in consequence, but the Copenhagen "outrage" had completely revolted the Tsar and driven both him and Denmark–Norway into the arms of Napoleon. In reply to these charges, Ministers claimed to prove, from the Tsar's own words, that Russia had been antagonised long before Copenhagen and that the blame belonged to Opposition which had declined to make any serious effort, when in power, to bring the Tsar aid in the Baltic.[3]

[1] *Declaration of Russia against England. Done at St. Petersburgh, October 26, 1807.* The British reply was the *Order of Council for General Reprisals against Russia.* It is doubtful whether Ministers would have gone to these lengths but for the embargo Alexander had laid on British ships in Russian harbours.

[2] The Bohn Edition of *Blair's Chronological Tables, Enlarged and Continued* gives February 21, 1808, as the date of the Russian invasion of Finland.

[3] Cf. *Declaration of Russia against England, Done at St. Petersburgh, October 26, 1807*: "Twice has the Emperor taken up arms in a cause in which the interests of England were most immediately concerned: but he has solicited to no purpose her co-operation to promote the accomplishment of her own objects. He did not require she should unite her forces with his: he was anxious only she would make a diversion in their favour. He was astonished that in the

And whereas, according to Ministers, Copenhagen had proved to the world that Great Britain was both very strong and very vigilant, the military and diplomatic record of Opposition, when in office in 1806 and 1807, had been lamentable and might well, if continued, have brought complete disaster.[1]

It is, perhaps, hardly worth going into the full Sessional details of the angry Copenhagen debates or to notice the parallel disputes that broke out on Ministers' Order in Council of November 1807 which Opposition declared to have gone well beyond the limits of the prudent or the justifiable in its treatment of the commerce of irritated neutrals. It may suffice to say that, despite the apparently satisfactory numerical majorities that voted with Ministers even on the occasion of such critical debates as those of February 3rd in the Commons and February 8th in the Lords, Government, throughout the Session, was felt to have made a relatively poor showing against Opposition's charges.[2] Here is the *Annual Register*'s summing-up of the long-drawn-out controversies on the Copenhagen attack and the November Order in Council:[3]

> On both these subjects the members in opposition had the advantage of standing not only on what they maintained to be political expediency, but the plausible ground of justice and the law of nations. . . . It was very generally remarked, that during the present Session the Opposition to ministry was unusually keen, vigilant and persevering. The present ministers were not supposed to possess much ability—on the whole, there was allowed to be a superiority of powers, of both reasoning and

furtherance of her own cause she herself would make no exertion. On the contrary, she looked on a cold spectatrix of the sanguinary theatre of war, which she herself had kindled, and sent a part of her troops to attack Buenos Ayres. Another portion of her army, which seemed to be destined to make a diversion in Italy . . . were employed in taking possession of Egypt. . . ."

[1] *Annual Register*, 1808, History, p. 66, for the standing joke that Canning tried to make of Opposition's alleged bungling of the Dardanelles expedition. Misfortunes had also occurred to Opposition's expeditions to Egypt and Buenos Aires. In the Buenos Aires expedition the commander appointed, General Whitelocke, had revealed conspicuous incapacity and worse. Cf. *New Annual Register*, 1808, History, pp. 221–2, for public disappointment that, after court-martial proceedings of thirty-one days, he was, in March 1808, not sentenced to be shot.

[2] Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 39, for the division figures of February 3rd in the Commons which gave Opposition 108 against Government's 253. In the Lords, Opposition's debating strength, increased by the arrival of Grey to reinforce an already strong team (Grenville, Erskine, Holland, Lauderdale, etc.) was made the more apparent both by the complete silence of the nominal Prime Minister, Portland, and the decision of Sidmouth's tactically important following to question the necessity for the attack upon Denmark.

[3] *Annual Register*, 1808, History, p. 74.

oratory, among their opponents: who, fully sensible of this, seized every opportunity of hanging on the skirts of ministers, and distracting and worrying them with incessant debates.

It is a summing-up the more significant since Opposition should apparently have been weakened or even divided by some of its problems of organisation and by the "extreme" views on foreign affairs of some of its adherents. On the question of organisation, for example, Opposition had had to provide itself with a new leader in the Commons owing to Grey's succession to his father's peerage, and George Ponsonby did not, in the end, prove to be the commanding personality required. Yet this notwithstanding, and notwithstanding, also, some Peace advocacy from sections of the Opposition, which was spiritless enough to rouse even so violent an anti-Ministerialist as Cobbett to fury,[1] Government's strength and prospects were not improved by the Session of 1808.[2]

If Ministers were held to have made a relatively poor showing in the Parliamentary proceedings of 1808, it was due as much to home politics as to foreign. Home politics might not have provided Opposition with a question of the magnitude of Copenhagen or the Yankee-provoking Order in Council, but they had provided issues considerably more capable of stirring the "man in the street", whether in Dublin or London, to rage against Ministers as "anti-popery hypocrites" or "mere Court sycophants". On the Catholic question, for example, it was not so much in the great formal debates, late in May, on a new series

[1] Cf. *Cobbett's Weekly Political Register*, January 23, February 13, February 20, February 27, 1808. In the last-named *Register* Cobbett thus continued some public letters to William Roscoe, the well-known Opposition banker of Liverpool, who had succeeded in raising considerable Peace petitioning in the industrial districts of the North: "You, however, a philanthropist by trade . . . are lavish in your praises of the valour, the skill, and the wisdom of Napoleon . . . and, in all cases, where it is possible to make an Old-Bailey-like defence of him, that defence is made by you, with as much apparent earnestness and zeal, as if, at the several paragraphs of your pamphlet, you had received a refreshing fee. I do not mean to insinuate, that you have received, or that you expect, any fee at all; but, I think, the public will agree with me, that this conduct of yours is a pretty good proof, that you have no very deeply rooted hatred to despotism, and that all your cry about liberty must be regarded as merely poetical." Northern industrialists and their employees, however, could already claim to be feeling some of the effects of the "Continental system" and to be anticipating a terrible aggravation from the effects of American resentment.

[2] Cf. *New Annual Register*, 1808, History, p. 237. This once-Oppositionist organ, now conducted on other principles, held that "even allowing that on many of the ministerial measures they [Opposition] could bear away the victory in respect of argument; yet . . . by attacking indiscriminately all the measures of ministry, the opposition rendered their own motives and objects suspected . . . and [excited] a kind of compassion for the ministers thus beset and harassed. . . ."

of Irish Catholic petitions that Ministers suffered, in the eyes of all "moderate" men, as in the proceedings on two relative trivialities which revealed, in some Ministers, an anti-Catholic bias that was almost suicidal in view of the hopes which Napoleon still placed in Ireland. Thus Dr. Duigenan, a Catholic-baiter of the worst Irish type whose every Orange speech in Parliament was worth a battalion to Napoleon, had not only been promoted Irish Privy Councillor but Ministers professed to see nothing untimely or unusual in such a course.[1] And what was perhaps worse, was Perceval's fixed determination to bring the annual Maynooth grant down from the figure of £13,000 to which it had been taken, in 1807, by Opposition as some slight set-off to Catholics' grievous tithe-burdens and as some additional security that more Catholic priests would be trained in Ireland instead of upon the Continent. The anti-Catholic prejudices of Perceval and some of his friends, which could suffer damaging debates to arise on the matter of reducing Maynooth's yearly grant from £13,000 to £9250,[2] seemed the more envenomed in view of the annual £23,103 which Parliament had voted a few weeks earlier to the Protestant Chartered Schools, long accused, though these had been, of deliberate proselytism and charged, though they now were, with the adoption of a new and more anti-Catholic catechism.[3]

In London, of course, the man in the street was apt to grow excited about something different from Catholic grievances. Early in the Session, for example, Sir Francis Burdett attracted his attention to the vast sums accumulated, from ships captured since 1792, as Droits of Admiralty and regarded, if a recent grant of £20,000 to the Duke of York was any example, as providing additional sources of power and revenue to the Royal family.[4] But

[1] Cf. *Cobbett's Parliamentary Debates*, May 11, 1808, for Opposition raising a vote of 107 against 179 on the Duigenan appointment. It was asserted by one Opposition speaker (W. Smith) that "a great majority of those who were in the habit of regularly voting with ministers did not scruple to censure the measure of making Dr. Duigenan a privy counsellor in the severest terms".

[2] Cf. *Ibid.*, April 29, and May 5, 1808, on which latter day Opposition twice divided at the encouraging figures of 82–106 and 82–112. One of the Irish Whigs (Colonel Mathew, Tipperary) had claimed, as the result of personal inspection of Maynooth, that the institution was most economically conducted and that the higher figure was necessary to complete the roofing of buildings, then admitting water. Colonel Mathew put the blame for the suggested reduction principally on the Duke of Cumberland.

[3] *Ibid.*, April 11th, for Parnell (Queen's County) and Fitzgerald (Kerry).

[4] Cf. *Ibid.*, for the proceedings of February 9th and 11th. Ministers, after an unhappy start, decided on some concession and agreed to supply information on the application of the Droits accumulations. The Advocate-General had

eager as was the man in the street for scandal-mongering about the royal dukes, Sir Francis Burdett failed to make the Duke of York's £20,000 from the Admiralty Droits a leading Sessional issue just as he failed at the end of the Session to raise a storm against the Duke of Cumberland by revelations of the serious increase of flogging in the regiment under the Duke's command.[1] The fact was that most of the nation's available fund of political indignation was going, during the Session of 1808, into the struggle for a Bill aimed at abolishing the thoroughly unpopular practice of granting offices in reversion. The 1807 Committee on Finance, though moderately enough led by the "independent" Mr. Bankes, had quickly decided that considerable savings to the nation might be effected by an abolition of the large number of sinecures still existing, sinecures sometimes granted two, or even three deep, "for political services".[2] To prevent new claimants to compensation being created while a clear list of the offices to be abolished was drawn up, the Committee on Finance had suggested making a definite end to all appointments "in reversion", appointments, that is, deciding the succession to an office in advance of a vacancy. Yet after Bankes had got his Offices in Reversion Bill through the Commons, the Lords had chosen to destroy it on March 10, 1808, and had so forced on Bankes, who did not want to be responsible for any dangerous agitation, the production of a substitute Bill which the Lords were prepared to accept because it merely suspended for a short time the "royal prerogative" to appoint to offices "in reversion". There was a good deal of genuine public

probably been ill-advised to say: "He was very ready to allow that a small part of this fund had certainly been appropriated to acts of grace and liberality, on the part of his majesty, to the younger branches of the royal family. Was his majesty to be the only father in his kingdom, who was to be prevented from thus disposing of a portion of that over which he had an undoubted control? If any honourable member thought this application of the fund improper, he was not ashamed to say, that he completely differed from him. . . ." (*New Annual Register* abridgement.)

[1] *Cobbett's Parliamentary Debates*, June 30th. According to Burdett the Duke's regiment, the 15th Dragoons, had under a previous commander only had six instances of flogging in eight years. Under the Duke eighty floggings had occurred in half the time.

[2] Cf. *Ibid.*, April 7, 1808, for Sir John Newport giving a short but very revealing list. Nine offices of £300 a year were held in reversion in the Irish Customs; the office of storekeeper of the port of Dublin, at a salary of £2,135, had still to run two of the three lives for which it had been originally granted; two brothers of a "noble marquis" held the post of craner and wharfinger to the port of Dublin, with reversion to Lord H. S. Conway; the comptroller of the port of Cork was Sir John Lees, and there was reversion to his two sons and so on. Newport was Opposition's ex-Chancellor of the Exchequer, Ireland.

indignation about the supposed conspiracy between office-mongers and royal dukes, and public suspicion was increased when it transpired that the Committee on Finance, as remodelled by Ministers, was making such difficulties about Bankes's very moderate proposals for sinecure and other reforms that legislation was, for the time, out of the question.[1]

Fortunately for Ministers, events occurred towards the end of the Session which diverted public attention pretty thoroughly from the dubious and unsatisfactory scene at Westminster. Most stimulating and welcome news came from Spain of great popular uprisings against the violence and trickery employed against that proud nation by Napoleon, and Opposition it was which, on June 15th, in the person of Sheridan, demanded "a bold stroke for the rescue of the world". By the close of the Session on July 4th even Whitbread, who had argued earlier for another attempt to negotiate with Napoleon, showed himself sufficiently infected by the great outburst of popular enthusiasm for Spain to add his voice to those who were urging Ministers on to bold courses. The hopeful summer of 1808 was made more hopeful yet by reports that Russia and Austria, cheered, too, by the events in Spain, were protesting jointly against Napoleon's seizure of the Papal States and Etruria, and that Austria, in particular, was arming with a vigour that was causing Napoleon great anxiety. The climax of the first exuberant stage of Peninsular intervention was, perhaps, marked by the great banquet offered, on August 4th, by an assembly of politicians of all parties, to the Spanish representatives in London. Here is one description:[2]

August 4th. This day, a grand dinner was given at the London Tavern, in honour of the Spanish Patriots. So early as three o'clock

[1] Cf. *New Annual Register*, History, pp. 226 et sqq.: "The fate of this bill [on reversionary grants] was singular, and of a nature to alarm, not only the friends of oeconomical reform, but also those who suspected a secret and powerful influence behind the throne. . . . By many persons, the opposition to the bill, and the mode in which the opposition was conducted and rendered eventually triumphant, were regarded as levelled not so much at it, as a final and insulated measure, as in its character of a bill originating with the committee of finance, and intended principally as the forerunner of more important and radical plans of oeconomical reform, which they were expected to recommend. . . . It must particularly grieve the real friend of his country, that the opinions of such a man as Mr. Bankes were not sanctioned by the majority of the committee: he could not be considered as a party man; and the whole tenour of his parliamentary conduct proved that he was by no means disposed to enter into outrageous or impracticable schemes of reform."

[2] *Edinburgh Annual Register*, 1808, Chronicle, ii, 163.

the street was crowded with spectators.... The windows of all the houses were filled with elegantly dressed females, the roofs were not visible, so great was the crowd that covered them, and even every lamp-post swarmed with boys.... So early as four o'clock the company began to arrive, and at five all the seats in the great room were filled, except those at the table appropriated to the noble visitors and principal patrons of the fête. At half past six the Spanish Deputies made their appearance. Their approach was announced by the loud plaudits and huzzas of the crowd.... The decoration of the head table was splendid ... in one place Britannia offering her assistance to Spain; in another, Fame supporting a medallion, on which were inscribed the names of the different provinces of Spain, who have stood foremost in resisting the common enemy ... in other parts the arms and standards of Spain intermixed with those of England.... The chair was filled by Sir Francis Baring, and about him sat the Spanish Deputies ... the Portuguese Ambassador, Earls Camden and Bathurst, Viscount Sidmouth, Lords Erskine and Hawkesbury, Sirs Charles Price and William Curtis, Messrs Sheridan, Canning, Perceval and Windham; Aldermen Combe and Shaw; Messrs. Mellish, Thornton, &c.

It was something new for all parties in Britain to be able to applaud a popular revolution which was at once a movement for a legitimate king against a "usurper" and an assertion of a "people's liberty" against a "foreign tyrant".[1]

[1] The *Farington Diary* under July 2nd had been prompt to note—to the point of copying out extracts—Cobbett's enthusiasm for the popular aspect of the resistance to Napoleon, hitherto "smothered under the incubus of Despotism".

"The cry of jacobinism, which Mr. Yorke had begun upon this occasion, was echoed by Lord Castlereagh. 'Mr. Whitbread,' he said, 'seemed to doubt the existence of a systematical conspiracy to traduce and calumniate the Duke of York and the royal family; but who was there that read the daily newspapers . . . who could entertain a doubt that a systematic conspiracy did exist, with the determined object of running down the characters of the princes of the blood, and destroying, through them, the monarchic branch of the constitution? It was evident that the same party who in times past endeavoured to subvert all the establishments of the country by force of arms, was now endeavouring to undermine them, by calumniating the members of the royal family, and all persons in eminent and distinguished situations. . . ."

The *Edinburgh Annual Register* on Ministers' difficulties, January 1809.

"Many join in the cry of Reform from ignorance, many from folly, many from fanaticism. Some are incited by the vilest passions, and some from more pure, but not less dangerous principles. Numerous are the knaves and numerous the dupes desirous of change."

Windham in the Commons, May 26, 1809, combating the renewed demand for "radical reform".

J. W. Ward, M.P. attacks Ministers, January 23, 1810.

"It appeared, that during the last seven or eight months, his majesty's ministers had failed in three great and deliberate designs: and that, if we extended our view a little further, we should include the campaign which terminated in the death of Sir John Moore; which again was preceded, at no long distance, by the convention of Cintra; so that, on the whole, the result was this, that during the time his majesty's ministers had conducted his government, they had attempted every thing, everywhere, on the largest scale, and that in every thing they had failed: except, indeed, in that instance, in which they directed his arms, not against his enemies but his allies. . . . Now to maintain, that accident had been everything, and misconduct nothing, in those transactions, was to maintain that a species of miracle was worked against us. Accidents might account for some detached failures in the course of a

long administration: but a man must have a high opinion of the king's servants indeed, and must moreover have an understanding most singularly constituted, who could persuade himself that the convention of Cintra, the miserable expulsion of our army under Sir John Moore, the ludicrous capture of Ischia and Procida, the second useless, expensive and destructive campaign in Spain, and, to crown all, the expedition to Walcheren; that all these things . . . not a single success intervening to break the chain of calamity, happened by pure ill-luck. . . . There had been times when even the present ministers, or any other persons of moderate understandings and attainments, might have governed the country, though not with much credit, yet without danger. But now that the whole power of Europe was concentrated in France, and the whole power of France concentrated in one man, and that the greatest general and statesman the world ever produced, and the bitterest enemy England ever knew . . . sure he was, that the country could not be preserved by the remnant of a ministry, by something weaker than that which was supposed to have attained the utmost point of debility."

THE brief party honeymoon which had reigned in the country during the high summer of 1808, thanks to universal enthusiasm for the Spanish Patriots, was not destined to last long.[1] By a singular chance, it was a striking British victory, with a disappointing sequel, that provoked the next violent outbreak of party controversy. In the early summer of 1808 Ministers had ordered large parts of the considerable British Army now available to sail for Spain. Sir Arthur Wellesley, the first British general to arrive in Peninsular waters, found the triumphant Spanish Patriots of the North-West so confident that they declined his offer to land a supporting army and suggested that it might go, instead, to aid the Portuguese, whose revolt against French rule had been a good deal less successful than that of the Spaniards. This had led on to the difficult but finally successful British disembarkation on open beaches at the mouth of the Mondego river, and then had come an advance towards Lisbon which had forced the French, aware that all Portugal was preparing to rise against them, to stake everything upon an attempt to drive the British back to their ships. The Battle of Vimiero saw the French attackers so hard hit that the British commanders were soon faced with French propositions for an armistice and even a French offer to evacuate Portugal under capitulation. Additional British troops had, indeed, been landing steadily, and a specially large contingent, under Sir John Moore, was still on its way when Wellesley, with two senior officers who had disembarked after him, decided that the terms offered by the French in the Convention of Cintra were too advantageous to be rejected or disregarded.

The British generals were, perhaps, over-conscious of such grave difficulties of their own as the need to land all stores and supplies at mere, open landing-beaches while the French were in possession of almost every strong-point in the country.[2] Undoubtedly they failed to see how desperate the position of the French really was, with a superior British army facing them on the sea-coast, a rebellious and inflamed Portuguese populace in their rear, and, farther back still, the triumphant Spanish forces which

[1] Cf. *Edinburgh Annual Register*, 1808, History, p. 355, for one instance of the universal enthusiasm: "Such was the eagerness to participate in the glorious struggle, that the militia almost universally offered themselves for foreign service." [History, as above, will be used for History of Europe.]

[2] *Ibid.*, for the British generals worrying even about the effects that the oncome of winter might have had on a campaign begun so relatively late as August.

had eliminated French power so effectively from Western Spain that, to achieve safety, the "Army of Portugal" would have had to attempt to fight a way back almost to the Pyrenees. When the British people learned of the terms that had been conceded to the French Army of Portugal—departure, not to prisoner-of-war camps, but to France, in shipping provided by Britain and crammed with much of the spoil of outraged Portugal, carried, of course, under the specious designation of "army stores and supplies" or "officers' baggage"—a howl of rage went up throughout the country.[1] The cancellation of the Convention was demanded, and though Ministers resisted the outcry as neither prudent nor honourable, it was only at the cost of great discontent and the final concession of summoning all the three general officers, responsible for the Convention, to face a Court of Military Inquiry in London.

It is, perhaps, necessary to go to a contemporary account to understand the part that indignation about the Convention of Cintra played in the politics of the time. Here are extracts from an account in the *Edinburgh Annual Register*, a very well-written record, composed partly, it would seem, by Walter Scott:[2]

> Sir Arthur Wellesley's account of the battle [of Vimiero] reached England a fortnight before the armistice and convention arrived. The account was neither clear nor satisfactory; nevertheless, his declaration that the enemy had suffered a signal defeat, confirmed, as it was, by tidings, at the same time, that the French had proposed to evacuate Portugal, filled the whole nation with joy; and the news of Junot's unconditional surrender was expected as what must certainly ensue. When the terms of the convention arrived, the ministry ordered the Park and Tower guns to be fired, as if it had been matter of rejoicing. Never did any ministry so completely mistake the temper of the public; and never was any public feeling so unanimously and so instantaneously manifested, as the indignation of all England at these unparalleled terms of advantage conceded to a beaten enemy, and to such an enemy! . . . it was universally felt that no former transaction had ever so fatally blasted the hopes of the country, or inflicted so deep and mortal a wound upon its honour. Nothing else could be talked of, nothing else could be thought of: men greeted each other in the streets with execrations upon those who had signed this detested convention:

[1] Cf. *Edinburgh Annual Register*, 1808, History, pp. 371–5, for the twelve carriages, for example, carried off by Junot, the French commander, amidst other "personal baggage" so extensive that he had at first demanded five ships for its transport. Among "army supplies" transported for the French were full "regimental chests" as well as an Army chest.

[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 367 et sqq.

. . . The London newspapers joined in one cry of wonder and abhorrence. . . . The provincial papers proved that, from one end of the island to the other, the resentment of this grievous wrong was the same: some refused to disgrace their pages by inserting so infamous a treaty: others surrounded it with broad black lines, putting their journal in mourning . . . some headed the page with a representation of three gallows, and a general suspended from each. . . .

What could be done? There were not wanting writers who called upon government to annul the convention. The Romans would have done so, and have delivered up the generals who signed it, bound and haltered, to the enemy's discretion. . . . The blow might have decided the fate of Europe. France had lost an army in Andalusia, and how deeply Bonaparte felt the loss was shewn by the anxiety with which he concealed it from the French people. What might not have been the effect of the destruction of a second and larger army, following so close? . . .

If anything could add to the shame and mortification of the people of England, in this transaction, it was the contrast between the conduct of their own generals and that of Castanos and Morla. . . . While Dupont was shunned, as a ruffian whose presence was loathsome, and whose company would have been contamination—Junot, with a heavier load of guilt and infamy, was giving his grand dinners, where the French and English officers were served upon stolen plate of silver and gold, and feasted together upon the spoils of Portugal. . . .

Meantime, meetings were convened in every part of England, to express the indignation of the people at the convention of Cintra, and to call for the punishment of those by whose misconduct and incapacity the interests of this country and its allies had been so shamefully sacrificed. . . . It soon appeared that these meetings displeased the ministry; in those counties where their influence was despotic, they prevented, and everywhere else their partisans and dependents opposed them. . . .

The Convention of Cintra continued to provide matter for political controversy for a considerable time, and, in fact, even on February 21, 1809, after a new Parliamentary Session had been occupied for over a month with much else that was critical and exciting, Opposition still thought it worth while to stage a formal Vote of Censure on the "misconduct and negligence of his Majesty's ministers" with respect to the Convention. And the division of 153 against 203, raised by Opposition, was hardly one to exhilarate Ministers, who were in the midst of the most trying and unexpected difficulties.[1] It was not merely that Opposition

[1] Cf. *Edinburgh Annual Register*, 1809, History, pp. 52–3, for a list of the minority, printed in the fashion bestowed on the "patriot" minorities of the past.

had attacked Canning's handling of a not very sincere Russo-French offer to negotiate, that had come in October, or that the Peninsular situation which had seemed so bright in August and September had become catastrophic in December and January, with the French reoccupation of Madrid and the fearful hardships and losses of Sir John Moore's retreat to Corunna. Opposition could, of course, be trusted to "demonstrate" that the dead general was the hero of the piece while Ministers, who had done nothing effective between Vimiero in mid-August and Moore's hurried and enforced retreat in December, were the villains. But even this was not the most trying part of Ministers' situation when compared with that in which they were placed by their attempts to defend the Duke of York, Commander-in-Chief, from Opposition revelations, making it clear that he had allowed a mistress to traffic in military commissions as one way of maintaining her. Mrs. Clarke, the mistress in question, when abandoned by the royal Duke, had been persuaded by an Opposition Parliamentarian, Colonel Wardle, to supply all the information she had, and, as a result, Parliament and the country were spending a good deal of their time and energy, during the Session of 1809, in absorbed investigation of a mass of reeking and almost incredible abuses.[1]

Ministers, of course, did their utmost to discredit the evidence offered against the Duke of York, though there was good reason to believe that Mrs. Clarke was far from being the first or the only mistress of the Duke who had obtained part of her maintenance from the traffic in commissions.[2] Ministers even carried their worried majority with them in a declaration acquitting the Duke of personal corruption and so facilitating the Duke's "voluntary" resignation. But manœuvres of this kind were only carried out at a dangerous cost in Ministerial and Parliamentary prestige, and they provoked a public temper which some considered as more dangerous than anything that had been known even in the days of

[1] Cf. *Cobbett's Parliamentary Debates*, January 20, 1809, for Wardle giving notice, on the second day of the Session, of a motion relative to the Duke of York. Wardle, who was a member of a firm of Army clothing contractors, had had his nose sharpened for the detection of abuses by that mysterious allotment of Army greatcoat contracts, which he had brought before Parliament in 1808.

[2] Cf. Major Hogan's *Appeal to the Public and a Farewell Address to the Army* (late 1808) which Ministers had tried to suppress by instituting prosecutions against twenty-six printers and publishers as well as the writer who had edited the *Appeal*. The *Appeal* alluded to "a *Cooke*, a *Creswell*, a *Clarke*, a *Sinclair*, or a *Carey*" as recognised avenues of promotion in the Army.

the Revolutionary War. Here is one acute and interesting comment on the "disaffected" and their leaders:

> The disaffected of the present times adapted their arguments more wisely to the vulgar. The reform for which they pleaded was to save money. According to them, the wisdom of public measures was to be estimated exclusively by their expense: Government was a combination of the rich to raise money from the people, and divide it among themselves and their dependents. Never before had sedition appeared in so sordid a shape.
>
> To the writers of this faction nothing could be more welcome than this inquiry into the conduct of the commander-in-chief. During the whole of the progress of the investigation they devoted their whole attention to it. This, they said, was of paramount importance; it mattered not what was going on on the continent, it mattered not what became of Spain.... They who shall read the history of this eventful era hereafter, when temporary politics will be reduced to their proper insignificance, will wonder that such language could have been successful. Such, however, is the temper of this generation, that for three months the public attention was monopolised by this miserable subject. The provincial newspapers, now almost as universally anti-ministerial as they were otherwise in Mr. Pitt's time, carried it into every ale-house throughout the kingdom, and there was not a hovel in which the Duke and Mrs. Clarke were not the topic of conversation. "Every penny paid to Mrs. Clarke," the people were told, "was out of their pockets. The money annually lavished upon her was equal to the poor-rates of fifty parishes—to all the direct taxes of twenty—to the maintenance of above six hundred labouring families. By these means the farmer was deprived of his comforts, the labourer pinched in his food, and fuel, and raiment. Oh how many widows, how many hundreds and thousands of the people were suffering for her, and for the accursed system of corruption and profligacy, of which this was but a single sample! What we had yet seen was but a verse of one of the chapters of one of the books of one of the volumes of corruption—it was but as a blade of grass to a whole meadow."
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> Those writers, who deluded the people by these inflammatory and preposterous exaggerations, desired nothing more than that the duke should be acquitted by ministerial influence. It afforded them new grounds for vilifying the House of Commons, and bringing government into disrepute.... Colonel Wardle was at once raised to the very height of popularity; the city of London voted him its freedom; he was proposed with general applause as a member of the Whig Club; and addresses of thanks were poured in upon him from almost every town in England, all accompanied with resolutions condemning the corruption of government, and asserting the necessity of radical reform.

It will be perceived that the term "radical reform" had here

risen prominently to the surface, and from this time, indeed, the "radical reformers" were, by some writers, treated as a definite party with command not only of the streets and a large number of journals but also of the more "Jacobin" section of the Parliamentary Opposition.[1] And as there was some further discovery of "jobs", in partial consequence of the pursuit of indications given in the main Duke of York inquiry, the position seemed, for a time, to grow uglier still. It was, for example, most unfortunate for Ministers that there had come a revelation that Castlereagh, when President of the Board of Control, had offered to put an East India writership at the disposal of Lord Clancarty in order to forward that nobleman's entry into Parliament as a Government supporter. Though Castlereagh had not been aware of the negotiations that followed on his offer, it transpired that the writership in question was to have been made over to one of that class of regular traffickers in contraband appointments, whose existence had been revealed by the Duke of York inquiry, and it would have been disposed of for 3000 guineas. Excitement rose high again, and despite the growing alarm of the more conservative section of Opposition, which now began to fear "Jacobinism" in earnest, Ministers were pushed hard in a division of 167–214.[2]

Meanwhile, on May 1st, a great demonstration of the "friends of Parliamentary reform" was organised once more[3] and, on May 5th, the "radical reformers" in Parliament brought forward further charges in regard to the filling of the seats for Cambridge, Rye, Hastings and Queenborough with Government supporters at "immense" cost to the nation. Though Windham, representing

[1] The *Edinburgh Annual Register* so treated the "radical reformers", and its able writing is obvious from the months of Cobbett summarised above.

[2] Cf. *Cobbett's Parliamentary Debates*, April 25th. The trafficker in question, Castlereagh admitted, had been bold enough to interview him in person though he had represented himself as coming from a member of parliament, who wished to place a nephew in India, before retiring. Lord Archibald Hamilton, one of Ministers' most persistent enemies in the House, moved that Lord Castlereagh had been guilty of a violation of his duty, of an abuse of his influence and of an attack upon the purity and constitution of the House. Lord Archibald was member for Lanarkshire, and another prominent participant in the attack was C. W. Wynn, the eminently "respectable" member for Montgomeryshire from 1799 to 1850.

[3] Cf. *Edinburgh Annual Register*, 1809, History, pp. 241–4, for the 1200 banqueters at the Crown and Anchor, headed by a number of M.P.s including Burdett, Colonel Wardle, Madocks, W. Smith ("who pronounced a panegyric upon the two societies of the Friends of the People and for Constitutional Information") and Lord Cochrane who "brought with him the lustre of a new naval victory". Major Cartwright moved the resolutions inviting every town, city and neighbourhood to petition Parliament anew.

the more conservative elements in Opposition, and Opposition's leader himself, George Ponsonby, argued against the wisdom of some of the steps now being advocated, the "Jacobins" managed, on May 11th, to raise a vote of 85 against 310.[1] One of the most novel of the "Jacobin" demonstrations made in the closing half of the Session was, again, the work of Colonel Wardle. On June 19th Wardle undertook to show, in detail, why there was reason to believe that a saving of 16½ millions per annum could be effected in the national expenditure by the elimination of waste and extravagance in many Government services, from the Ordnance, Barrack and Army Medical departments to the Revenue Collection, the Colonies and the Pension List. Though "men of experience" claimed to see patent exaggerations on the very surface of Wardle's figures,[2] Ministers decided that it would be better not to refuse him the great mass of detailed information he demanded in the hope of substantiating his claims that Expenditure savings, to the full amount of the Income Tax, were possible and proper. All the twenty-four Parliamentary Papers Wardle asked for were granted.

Ministers, indeed, during so difficult and agitated a Session as that of 1809, had had to learn, if they were to keep their feet, the habit of bowing before the storm. Two of the Bills, admitted to the Statute Book in the course of the Session, reveal Ministers' problems and strategy even better, perhaps, than their decision to make some concessions to Wardle while waiting for him to ruin himself with the fickle "public" by the inevitable miscalculation or accident, certain to overtake the political "adventurer" of those times.[3] By the Act for "the further prevention of the sale and

[1] *New Annual Register*, 1809, History, p. 207. Madocks (M.P. Boston) was the prime mover on this occasion.

[2] Cf. *Edinburgh Annual Register*, 1809, History, pp. 294–7, for the "absurdity and fallacy" charged upon Wardle's figures and the strong approval given to Huskisson's hostile analysis of such proposals as the disbandment of two regiments of household troops as useless; the reduction of the costly cavalry from 23,000 men to 15,000 men; a lopping off of £200,000 per annum from the expenditure on the Army Staff and a similar reduction of the expenditure on the recruiting staff and the funds it administered, etc. etc.

[3] Discredit, as perhaps Government knew, was to begin overtaking Wardle by the end of the Session. Apparently a financial agreement had by then been negotiated between the Duke of York and Mrs. Clarke, and that engaging lady had decided to turn against the reforming politician who did not hold himself obliged to pay for the extravagant style of living she persisted in. The two lawsuits which Wardle lost, the first against a tradesman who claimed that he had been authorised to provide Mrs. Clarke with expensive furniture, and the second against the tradesman and Mrs. Clarke, combined, for perjury, created

brokerage of offices" Ministers apparently allowed the legislation to be provided which would make impossible, for the future, such abuses as had been revealed by the Duke of York inquiry and by the parallel inquiry, insisted on by the East India Company, into the use made by Castlereagh and others of the Board of Control's share of the Indian patronage. And, in view of the abundant proof forthcoming that Parliamentary seats had long been bargained for, on a much more extensive scale than offices, Ministers found it necessary to give up the idea of attempting a direct negative upon a Bill proposed by the wealthy and "respectable" Oppositionist, Curwen, to make criminal all species of traffic in seats in Parliament. The best Ministers could do was to suggest the wisdom of taking precautions against going too far, and on them, indeed, was thrown the onus of seeing that the "necessary" amendments were proposed which would make it less unsafe for all those "interests", which had hitherto had to bargain their way into the House of Commons, by agreement with landowners and other borough "patrons", to continue making arrangements for their representation in Parliament.[1] As might be expected, Opposition was advantageously placed for bringing all manner of charges against Government for having accepted Curwen's Bill under duress and then having arranged to nullify all its probable effects by amendment. In the end some of Opposition's most responsible politicians were actively allied with the "radical reformers" on a Bill which was said to have been made worse than useless, and having come near to defeating Government in a division of 85 against 97, the "radical reformers" tried a last

some of the same excitement, during the summer and autumn of 1809, as had been created, earlier in the year, by the charges against the Duke of York. It is clear from the tone of such organs as the *Edinburgh Annual Register* and the *New Annual Register* that, though the "people" regarded Wardle as the victim of a conspiracy and persisted in their support, Wardle's credit with the "respectable" (and, doubtless, his finances) never recovered from the shock. In June 1810 he seems to have hoped to work up a case against the very unpopular Duke of Cumberland, the mysterious death of whose valet, Sellis, was to be a theme for the scandal-mongers for many years to come. . . . But in this he was foiled, as it happens, by Place who, as foreman of the Coroner's jury, returned a verdict of *felo de se* which he strongly defended against Cumberland-baiters, including Wardle and Burdett, for years.

[1] Cf. *Edinburgh Annual Register*, 1809, History, pp. 249–81, for a long and revealing account of the Parliamentary tug-of-war on Curwen's Bill, which makes matters a good deal clearer than the mere text of the *Parliamentary Debates*. The *Edinburgh Annual Register* admits that two of Perceval's amendments practically cut the heart out of the Bill, that freeing members from Curwen's suggested anti-bribery oath, and that ending the specific mention of candidates' "implied" promises as equally culpable with "express" promises.

manœuvre against Ministers. They divided on an amendment to re-name the measure: "A Bill for more effectually preventing the sale of seats in Parliament for money, and for promoting a monopoly thereof to the Treasury by means of patronage."

It seems difficult to believe that Portland's Ministry could have survived the 1809 Session, by any species of Parliamentary manœuvre, if the continental situation had not, throughout the Session's course, seemed to be turning increasingly to Napoleon's detriment. If Moore's soldiers had been compelled to take to their ships in January, it was speedily proved that their diversion of Napoleon's energies and forces, at a critical time, had saved the Portuguese Regency at Lisbon as well as the greater part of Spain, including the whole South. The Vienna Government, in fact, decided not to abandon its plans of throwing, from its central position, very formidable forces against the main buttresses of Napoleon's position in Central Europe, the Confederation of the Rhine, the Kingdom of Italy, and the Grand Duchy of Warsaw. Austrian Ministers knew, for one thing, that they could reckon on important German risings against Napoleon as soon as hostilities began; they hoped that Britain, from Malta and Sicily, could light up, in Southern Italy, almost as anti-French a temper as reigned throughout Spain and Portugal; and, finally, they pressed for a major British landing in Hanover which, according to them, would bring down the whole Napoleonic fabric in North-Western Germany and the Low Countries. And when the war opened on April 8th, it became apparent that some, at least, of the Austrian calculations were justified by events. An immediate and most formidable revolt, in favour of Austria, broke out in the Tyrol;[1] North Germany saw the development of the dangerous revolts of Major Schill and the Duke of Brunswick; and, more important still, the Austrian armies, though compelled to retreat once more down the Danube, proved to be animated by a spirit combative and patriotic enough to enable them to turn on the invader and bring him into the deadliest peril. Napoleon, indeed, had hardly ever been in greater danger than after the murderous battles of Aspern and Essling on May 21st and 22nd, when, for some seven weeks, Europe rated as poor his chances of extricating the great

[1] *Ibid.*, History, p. 644: "The number of French and Bavarians in the country amounted to 27,000, and of these, all who escaped with their lives were either wounded or taken. Never was any insurrection more general, more wisely conducted, nor more completely successful."

French forces that had been driven to entrench themselves on the Danube island of Lobau, near Vienna. During those seven weeks, moreover, much else was going wrong with the Napoleonic Empire. The new British forces, under Sir Arthur Wellesley, that had appeared in the Peninsula and driven the French out of Northern Portugal, commenced a dangerous advance on Madrid; similar success had attended the Austrian troops sent into the Grand Duchy of Warsaw and Saxony; and much, it seemed, could legitimately be expected both from the formidable mobilisation of Britain's Mediterranean forces against Murat's Kingdom of Naples and from North German insurrections, directed particularly to the destruction of Jerome Buonaparte's Kingdom of Westphalia.[1] The great British military and naval armament, known, at the time of Parliament's prorogation, on June 21st, to be gathering for a great blow across the North Sea, might, in certain circumstances, have proved more dangerous to Napoleon than any other.

Unfortunately neither the British nor the Austrian Government systems proved as capable as Napoleon's of rising to the height of the emergency and the opportunity. Thus, in the Danube valley, Napoleon succeeded in obtaining a flow of material and reinforcements greater than that going to the Austrians who were facing him. And, as for Britain, not only did the Mediterranean effort against the Kingdom of Naples fail to do anything, even locally decisive, but the far more powerful North Sea effort also proved unfortunate from the start. It was, in the first place, so long a-gathering, that, three weeks before the order to sail could be given, Napoleon had secured a decision in the Danube valley, at Wagram (July 6th), and induced the Austrian Government to sign a temporary armistice. He still, of course, had perils enough to overcome, and there were still great opportunities across the North Sea for the gathering British armament if it had been properly directed and led.[2] Later, the Cabinet was bitterly attacked

[1] Cf. *New Annual Register*, 1809, History, p. 408: "Indeed, the ruling and paramount cause of the astonishing success of the French arms may be told in very few words; they were led on and directed by activity, skill, and talent, against the imbecility, the prejudices and the indecision of the old governments. . . ."

[2] Cf. *Edinburgh Annual Register*, 1809, History, p. 622: "Aware that this great armament was preparing, and ignorant of its destination, the French expected its arrival upon some part of their usurped and almost defenceless empire with considerable apprehension. . . . There were not an hundred soldiers at Ostend, or Bruges, or Ghent. . . . Many of the conscripts who had been recently raised in those provinces fled, and concealed themselves, in the hope of joining the English. . . ."

for having chosen the Scheldt estuary for its striking-point instead of the mouth of the Weser, and stinging reproaches were hurled against the blind selfishness which could neglect the opportunity of turning all Germany against Buonaparte because, forsooth, the seizure of Flushing and Antwerp offered Britain greater naval advantages. Strategically and administratively, however, Ministers could make out a very good case for the Scheldt but events proved that there was no case at all for Lord Chatham as military commander and very little more for Sir Richard Strachan as the naval commander. During five precious weeks, between the end of July and the beginning of September, the results of having effected a complete local surprise of the enemy were frittered away on slow operations against secondary objectives though it seems certain that a determined stroke against Antwerp would have been rewarded by the fall of that place and the secondary objectives too. Soon it was being resolved to confine the immediate aim of the expedition to the garrisoning of the island of Walcheren, but already the fatal malarial sickness had begun which inflicted such terrible losses on the British forces that even Walcheren had, by December, to be abandoned.[1] Meanwhile, the Austrian Government, disappointed alike by the relative ineffectiveness of British action on the North Sea shores, in the Mediterranean, and, it seemed, in Spain, could hardly be blamed for turning its armistice with France into the not wholly disastrous peace of October 1809. Possibly the break-up of the Portland Administration in the second half of September, after it had already become plain that Ministers had mismanaged their great blow against Napoleon, was the final factor that decided the Austrian Government to make peace before Napoleon demanded terms still more severe. To that break-up of the British Administration it is now necessary to turn.[2]

It seems that Canning, the brilliant Foreign Secretary, had decided, even before Austria reopened the struggle, that

[1] Cf. *New Annual Register*, 1809, History, p. 320: "our ministry might have learnt from the inhabitants, or they might have conjectured from the nature of its situation and climate, that it would prove a grave to our troops. Here, however, they were ordered to remain, and consequently were doomed to perish.... At length, after by far the greater proportion of our forces had either died of the pestilential disease, or been rendered by it incapable ... the fortifications, which had been repaired at a great expense, were destroyed; and the island was evacuated...."

[2] Cf. *Diary and Correspondence of Charles Abbot, Lord Colchester*, ii, 200–23, for much of the essential information.

Castlereagh, as War Minister, was not the man to force Britain's military machinery forward to the pace and intensity that would be necessary for success. Fluent to the point of verbosity himself, Canning doubtless under-rated the administrative efforts of Castlereagh, who could not adequately describe them. And if the Marquess Wellesley, Canning's own candidate for the direction of the war, would, perhaps, have been more insistent, with the commanders, for a relentless offensive, there is not much reason to doubt but that, with Chatham as general, the ultimate results of such pressure might well have increased the measure of Britain's misfortunes. This, however, is mere speculation, but certain it is that Canning had more than once pressed the largely nominal Prime Minister, the Duke of Portland, for a change at the War Office and had been told that a change would be made as soon as Castlereagh's friends had prepared him for the shock. When, in September, it was already plain that the great expedition to the Scheldt could only yield the most disappointing results, Canning resigned, after finding that the transfer of Castlereagh from the War Office had not yet begun to be arranged. Castlereagh, now learning for the first time of all that had gone on behind his back, charged Canning with dishonourable behaviour and insisted on a duel in which Canning was wounded.[1] The continuance of both Ministers in office was now impossible, and to increase the confusion, the Duke of Portland, a dying man, resigned also, from sheer mental and physical inability to undertake a reconstruction of the Government.[2] Grenville and Grey, as leaders of the Opposition, were thereupon invited, in the King's name, to joint consultations with Perceval and Liverpool, the leaders of the Cabinet rump. Grey declined even to come to town from his Northumberland home, and if Grenville hurried to London, it was only to make it clear that while Opposition would accept an invitation to advise the Crown, it had no intention of doing so in conjunction with Liverpool and Perceval. And after so mortifying a rebuff from Opposition, Perceval's chances of re-establishing a durable Ministry seemed so poor that a number of persons,

[1] Cf. *Edinburgh Annual Register*, 1809, History, p. 789: "Lord Castlereagh's complaint was, that Mr. Canning had applied clandestinely to get him removed from office, for the purpose of substituting Marquis Wellesley . . . before Easter, it was affirmed, he made this application to the Duke of Portland, and obtained his promise that Lord Castlereagh should be dismissed from office."

[2] He died on October 30th.

invited to take office, declined to compromise their political future.[1] Ministers' supporters, it is true, argued from the success of the great loyal celebrations held in October, to mark the beginning of the King's Jubilee, that Opposition was once more overrating its power to force the hand of the Crown.[2] But the very bad news that came in subsequently from Walcheren and the Peninsula was of a kind to shake much stronger and more imposing Ministries than that reconstructed by Perceval.

The public disquiet and discontent occasioned by the calamitous Walcheren casualties and by Wellington's final need to retreat, with heavy loss, from Spain back into Portugal, spurred anti-Ministerialists on to another petitioning campaign, calculated to tell against Government when Parliament should have re-assembled on January 23, 1810. As usual, the Radical elements among the Freemen of the City of London were both eager to give the anti-Ministerial signal and able, in a time of Government set-backs, to win the majorities which allowed them the use of the City's respected name and municipal machinery. And when a relatively moderate petition against Ministers, sent in the name of the Common Council,[3] was accorded so stiff a Royal reply that a "common hall" was gathered for a second and much stronger petition to which, despite the City's "ancient rights", all special facilities for presentation were "unconstitutionally" denied, there arose, between Ministers and the capital, a very pretty quarrel that hardly promised to make Government more popular.[4] Perhaps

[1] Cf. *Edinburgh Annual Register*, 1809, History, p. 791: "Nothing but extreme necessity could have induced the remaining ministers to make these overtures, and when their advances were thus rejected, great hopes were entertained by the adverse party, that they would not be able to hold their ground. So strongly did this opinion prevail, that it was affirmed and believed that some of the highest offices were offered to different persons and none could be found to accept them."

[2] Cf. *New Annual Register*, 1809, History, p. 327, for an indignant answer to Ministerialists, who were trying to identify support of Government with support of the Crown and *vice versa*: "those who are filled most completely with the most genuine spirit of loyalty . . . will be disposed to utter in the strongest language, those feelings of indignation which arise from perceiving how imperfectly the wishes of the sovereign for the good of his subjects are seconded by the conduct of his ministers. Hence the enthusiasm manifested throughout the nation on that day, which saw a monarch deservedly dear to Britain enter the fiftieth year of his reign."

[3] Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 328, for the means by which Ministers' friends had toned down a petition, originally more vehement. Yet "to this address, even when thus rendered palatable, his majesty's reply was very short and dry".

[4] Cf. *Ibid.*, 1810, Principal Occurrences, pp. 10–14, for the quarrel. The Lord Mayor and the Sheriffs, who had been instructed to deliver the petition, did not demand for the occasion, as had sometimes been done in the past,

the City petitions, in this instance, are less worth quoting than that from Berkshire, a county not lightly to be persuaded into "Jacobin" courses. With extracts from this revealing petition of the freeholders of Berkshire, adopted in January 1810, the chapter shall end.[1]

"We, your majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects," the petition ran, "the nobility, clergy, gentlemen, and freeholders of the county of Berkshire, beg leave to approach your majesty's throne with feelings of sincere attachment . . . anxious solicitude . . . and at the same time with sentiments of the deepest affliction at the perilous situation of the public affairs of these kingdoms. . . .

"It is unnecessary to remind your majesty of the enormous burdens imposed upon your people for supporting the war. . . . Your majesty has nevertheless seen that your subjects have patiently and even cheerfully submitted. . . . It is, however, our duty and our misfortune to have it to state to your majesty, that we discover neither wisdom, prudence, nor fidelity in your majesty's advisers; that their acts are marked by every appearance of rashness, incapacity, and folly: and that, under the government of persons so apparently inadequate to avert the dangers and difficulties of the country, we see no end to our misfortunes. . . .

"We humbly crave leave particularly to call your majesty's attention to the fruitless efforts of your gallant army. . . . Your majesty's advisers and commanders had for their guidance . . . in the last campaign in Spain and Portugal, the melancholy experience of the ever-to-be-lamented Sir John Moore, and the sufferings of his brave followers; and yet a second British army, superior in numbers to the first—was sent there, and hurried on into the heart of Spain, for no other purpose than that of making an useless display of valour, and meeting its own destruction. We crave your majesty's gracious attention likewise to the fatal expedition to the Scheldt.

"It is with equal grief and shame we are compelled further to submit to your majesty's attention, that whilst the armies of your empire were perishing by famine and the sword in Spain, and diseases in Walcheren, your majesty's ministers . . . have consumed the time . . . in the most disgraceful squabbles, intrigues and cabals. . . . We humbly therefore supplicate your majesty, that you will be pleased to institute

that the King should be sitting on his throne. But they did consider that they had a right to present the petition at a Levée to the King in person and they indignantly declined to accept the view that the petition could be handed in at the Secretary of State's office. It had, for years, been part of the Court's policy to deny all special City rights to mere "Livery" petitions adopted in "common hall", and the City, in reply, not merely reasserted all its claims but insisted that, to be requested to hand in petitions against Ministers to the very Ministers who were being petitioned against, was a virtual denial of the right of petition itself.

[1] *New Annual Register*, 1810, Principal Occurrences, pp. 14–15.

a most rigid inquiry into the causes of the calamitous issue of the two expeditions to Spain and the Scheldt. . . . We cannot conclude this our humble petition . . . without alluding to your majesty's gracious answer to a similar petition from the mayor and common council of the city of London, in which your majesty is pleased to refer the petitioners to the wisdom of parliament. We presume to state to your majesty, that we have seen for years past, with the deepest concern, that attempts to procure parliamentary inquiry upon the subject of our national misfortunes have in all cases been unsuccessful. . . .

"The House had, a very few days ago, refused, and as he thought rightly, to go into a committee to inquire into the state of the representation. If he were asked what was the motive which principally induced him to vote with the majority upon that question, he would say, that it was because he was convinced that it was a question which was not desired to be entered into by the greater part of the respectable class of society, whose opinions were undoubtedly deserving of grave and serious attention from the House. He had, on former occasions voted for some alteration in the mode of returning members in parliament, . . . and he had not now any fixed or rooted objections to reform in the representation. . . .

"It was his opinion, however, that there were many other preliminary steps which ought to be taken before such reform would be advisable. There should be acts passed to prevent the enormous expence of contested elections, and to prevent improper influence and interference. He was friendly to the measure, which he had often proposed [for a permanent ban on appointments in reversion], for the same reason that he opposed the motion for reform. He believed that there did exist a real, a sincere desire among that part of society of which he had spoken, for every moderate and substantial reform which would not attack the frame and foundation of the constitution. There never had been, he thought, a time in which it was more necessary to draw a line of separation between that body who wished only for moderate reforms, and the other body who wished for no reform at all, but for the subversion of the constitution. By opposing the reasonable wishes and expectations of the moderate, they might be driven into an alliance with the desperate and the violent. . . . It would be a dangerous opinion indeed to go abroad, that no sort of reform was to be expected from that House, constituted as it was at present—moderate men knew and felt that they had grievances which ought to be redressed."

Henry Bankes, M.P. in the Commons, May 31, 1810.

"We have already noticed, that the partisans of sir Francis Burdett dwelt with rapture on the prospect which was opened to the nation by the prince's coming into power, and reprobated in stronger terms than the regular opposition themselves, the restrictions under which he was laid. They eagerly laid

hold of a public declaration which he had made, that all government was for the people; and they took an early opportunity, after the regency was established, of addressing the prince on various topics connected with their leading principles, and the sanguine hopes they now indulged of seeing those principles brought into full and regular action. For this purpose a meeting was held in the Palace Yard, Westminster, where that indefatigable advocate of parliamentary reform major Cartwright at great length dwelt on his favourite topic, and where an address to the prince, pointing out in strong terms the dangers to which the nation was exposed from neglecting this measure, was brought forward and carried. This address appeared in the Gazette. Such a very unusual if not an unprecedented circumstance, which must have arisen from the express and positive command of the regent himself, gave fresh and additional vigour to the . . . friends of parliamentary reform. All the failings of the prince were forgotten: he was hailed as the patriotic prince so long beheld in the visionary raptures of the reformists. But a very short period elapsed before this party were compelled to be silent. . . ."

The *New Annual Register*, 1811 on a "reformist" hope, soon disappointed.

"*He* has had no art or part in any of the measures of the last 26 years. *He* has had no hand in adding six hundred millions to the national debt. *He* has had nothing to do with the Pitt wars against Republican principles. He had nothing to do in the *successes* over democrats. *He* has had no hand in the measures which have augmented the taxes four-fold. *He* has never had anything to do with that system which has augmented the poor-rates from 2 to 5 millions. In short, he stands *new*, *fresh*, and *fair* before the people. . . ."

Cobbett shows Reformers how to treat the Prince Regent as an Ally, January 1811.

MINISTERS expected the Parliamentary Session that opened on January 23, 1810 to be one of peculiar difficulty, and events justified their worst expectations. Formidable attacks on their record and their measures began on the very first day, and if they were repelled in divisions of 92–144 in the Lords and 167–263 in the Commons, those very figures gave proof that Opposition, encouraged by much outside clamour against Ministers, was mustering strongly enough to have good chances of defeating Government when the most questionable parts of the Ministerial record came up for detailed discussion. It was on January 26th that Government sustained its first critical defeat when a motion for a full inquiry into the Walcheren disaster was carried in the Commons by a majority of 195 against 186.[1] Then, on January 31st, a whole set of humiliating reverses was inflicted on Ministers when they presumed to oppose two aims which the "independent members" had very much at heart, the perpetuation of the temporary Act forbidding the granting of offices in reversion, and the appointment of such a Finance Committee as was desired by the "independent" Bankes, ex-Chairman of a Finance Committee that was held to have suggested valuable economies and sinecure-reductions in the past.[2]

During the months of February and March, a large part of the Commons' time was, of necessity, given to the Walcheren Inquiry on which the House had resolved in the Ministers' despite. And some of the most extraordinary parts of an extraordinary Session arose from an incidental decision taken in regard to the manner of holding the Inquiry in Committee of the whole House. Mr. Yorke, member for Cambridgeshire, moved and obtained the exclusion of strangers, and when this was soon afterwards

[1] Cf. *New Annual Register*, 1810, History, p. 24, with its final comment: "Majority against ministers, Nine!"

[2] Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 25: "Mr. Bankes next moved, after an introductory speech, for leave to bring in a bill to make perpetual an act passed last year to prevent the granting offices in reversion. He was supported by persons of all parties; as Mr. H. Thornton, Mr. Ponsonby, sir Samuel Romilly, and others; but the minister, Mr. Perceval, gave it his decided opposition; after a long debate, when the question was put, it was carried by acclamation, scarcely a single voice was heard to join that of the chancellor of the exchequer. After this, Mr. Bankes moved for the appointment of the finance committee, which was carried according to his own wishes, though vehemently opposed by the minister. Three times, indeed, he found himself in a minority; but no ways affected with what formerly was regarded as a proof of imbecility in counsels, he retained his place as if nothing of the kind had occurred."

challenged by the Opposition, he persuaded the House to stand by its first resolution, despite the anger of the excluded newspapermen who, according to him and others, had acted dangerously and disgracefully during the Duke of York Inquiry of the previous year. Before long Yorke had received the First Lordship of the Admiralty from a grateful Government and had been driven from the representation of Cambridgeshire by his outraged constituents, though, of course, his resolution had not prevented the "public" from gleaning a great deal of what went on at the Walcheren Committee.[1] On one notable occasion, for example, Whitbread took to the House the discovery that Chatham had secretly communicated, for the King's own information, a private Walcheren report, and beat the Ministers by seven on his demand that the King should be asked to send, for the House's examination, all the papers he might have received from Chatham.[2] And later, on March 7th, when Whitbread proposed Chatham's condemnation for his secret submission of the document in question, he beat Ministers more handsomely in a division of 221–188 and enforced Chatham's resignation of all his offices.

Meanwhile, the capital's political debating societies, dominated often by "Jacobins" who had once taken part in the work of the "notorious" London Corresponding Society, had entered the fray, and John Gale Jones, a prominent figure of the 1795–8 epoch, had been brought before the House of Commons and committed to Newgate for "the publication of a scandalous and libellous handbill, reflecting on the proceedings of this honourable house, and the conduct of certain of its members".[3] Gale Jones was

[1] Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 215: "Mr. Yorke's conduct on this occasion was justly appreciated by ministers and the public. The former were so sensible of the benefit they had derived from his seasonable enforcement of the standing order, that he soon obtained from them the situation of teller of the exchequer and first lord of the admiralty. In consequence of these appointments he necessarily vacated his seat for Cambridgeshire . . . in the defeat of his attempt to be re-elected, the sense of the nation was unequivocally expressed. . . ."

[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 44–50, for the proceedings of February 23rd.

[3] Cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 216–17, for an interesting note on the societies: "Soon after the commencement of the French revolution, the proceedings and speeches . . . outraged so completely the necessary restraints of order and good government, that by the operation of the acts (usually called the Pitt and Grenville acts) they were silenced. They were not opened again till several years afterwards; and for some time after their re-opening the subjects discussed in them were of a nature little connected with politics. . . . By degrees, however, they resumed, in some degree, their old character. . . . Of one of these societies John Gale Jones was the chief supporter, and the most popular and able orator. . . . Mr. Gale Jones—in conformity with his usual plan proposed for discussion in the British Forum (for such was the name of his debating society): 'Which was

committed on February 21st; on March 12th Sir Francis Burdett was defeated in a motion for his discharge; and on March 24th Cobbett's *Register* contained a letter from the indignant baronet denouncing the House's action in imprisoning Jones, without trial, as oppressive and illegal. With the help of Cobbett, himself awaiting trial and condemnation for what was considered a particularly dangerous "seditious libel",[1] Burdett had obviously set himself to appeal to the "public" and to make as much trouble as possible. Trouble, indeed, he made in abundant measure, but the results, inside Parliament, probably served to strengthen the tottering Government by giving it the votes of a number of "independents", who could not stomach the demagogy either of Burdett and Cobbett and feared that it might influence an Opposition Administration too much. And so, after the Walcheren Inquiry had been followed, on March 26th, 29th and 30th, by three days of warm debate, Ministers succeeded in defeating Censure motions in divisions of 275–227 and 275–224, and even obtained approval of their course in divisions of 272–232 and 253–232.[2]

A serious Parliamentary defeat of the Ministers became steadily more improbable as "Burdett and his mob" became more troublesome. Indeed, in the latter stages of the Session, a Ministry as

the most deserving of the censure of the public, Mr. Yorke's enforcement of the standing order . . . to exclude strangers from the (Walcheren) inquiry . . . or Mr. Windham's late attack on the liberty of the press?' The subjects for discussion . . . were always placarded in different parts of the metropolis; and this, of course, was exhibited in the same manner." Gale Jones, as living on his share of the British Forum's takings, was certain to arouse stronger resentment than would have been felt against one less dependent on agitation for his bread and butter.

[1] Cf. *New Annual Register*, 1810, Principal Occurrences, pp. 72–5, for "Trial of William Cobbett" at the date, June 14th. The Cambridgeshire militia, after being "embodied" for twenty continuous days in the summer of 1809, had "mutinied", and the unpopular German legion had restored "order". As five of the "ringleaders" had then been sentenced to the savage punishment of five hundred lashes each, Cobbett had written a flaming article containing some extraordinary language. Here is some biting irony from the *Register* of July 1, 1809: "*Five hundred lashes each!* Aye, that is right! Flog them! flog them! flog them! They deserve it, and a great deal more. They deserve a flogging at every meal time. 'Lash them daily, lash them duly'. What! shall the rascals dare to *mutiny*, and that too when the German legion is so near at hand! Lash them, lash them, lash them! They deserve it. O, yes; they merit a double-tailed cat. . . ." Cobbett had managed to delay the trial for many months but was found guilty by the jury, at the end of long proceedings, after only five minutes of consultation. On July 9th, when he came up for sentence, he was fined £1000 and condemned to two years in Newgate, though, as Newgate was then organised, it proved possible for Cobbett to continue the *Register*.

[2] *Ibid.*, History, pp. 138–9.

little respected, inside the House or out, as any that had been known for generations, was winning its divisions with ease. Thus, Grattan's motion, of May 18th, for Catholic Emancipation was defeated by a majority, larger from the fact that Grattan had had to admit that the Catholics now declined to accept, as they would once have done, a Royal veto on their episcopal nominations as the price of Emancipation. A very moderate Parliamentary Reform motion, responsibly moved on May 21st, was rejected in the Commons by the decisive majority of 234 votes against 115. And when, on June 13th, in the Lords, Grey spoke with singular eloquence and moderation on the "state of the nation", neither his frank admission of the country's peril from Napoleon's malevolent enmity nor his angry denunciation of the reckless demagogy of Burdett availed to win him more than 72 votes against the 134 thrown for Ministers, whose inadequacy was privately admitted by many who voted for them.[1] The fact was that large majorities in both Houses had decided that firm support of Ministers, however mediocre, was the safest way of meeting the new "Jacobin" uproars in the capital, excited by Burdett's imprisonment. Of that imprisonment, and the "Jacobin" uproars it provoked, something must now be said.

It seems that, after the appearance of Burdett's letter in Cobbett's *Register* of March 24th, some of the leading Parliamentary enemies of "Jacobinism" had detected the chance of either forcing Burdett to retract and ask pardon or, if he did not, to punish and disgrace him. On April 5th, after long debates, those zealots had had their way and carried a motion for Burdett's arrest, on a Speaker's warrant, by a majority of 190 against the 152 who, with greater moderation, desired Burdett to be "reprimanded in his place". Burdett took the resolution of resisting the Speaker's warrant as illegal, and on April 6th, 7th and 8th the capital saw some very

[1] Cf. *Cobbett's Parliamentary Debates*, June 13th (Lords), for Grey having gone so far with the majority as to allow Burdett's commitment to the Tower to be legal. He added, with dignity: "I cannot but feel a deep regret if I am deprived of my popularity by any misunderstanding of my views and objects on the part of the people; but it excites my indignation if I am robbed of my popularity by the basest misrepresentations, and the vilest delusions practiced by men who, without any regard to truth, sacrifice every really virtuous and patriotic object to the shouts of popular clamour. To obtain such a species of popularity requires neither virtue nor talents. Indeed men without virtue and talents are the best fitted to acquire such a popularity—men who, as we have seen in the present day, set themselves above all the decencies of private life, and above all those courtesies which men who really endeavour to do their duty, concede even to their adversaries." (The above differs slightly from Cobbett.)

dangerous scenes as "mobs", probably more numerous than the "Wilkes mobs" of a previous generation, gathered in Burdett's support. Here is one description of what followed on Burdett's arrest, early on April 8th, and his transport to the Tower under strong military escort:[1]

> The procession moved from sir Francis Burdett's house in the following order: Two squadrons of the 15th light dragoons, two troops of life guards . . . the coach with sir Francis; two more troops of life guards, a troop of the 15th light dragoons; two battalions of foot guards . . . and a party of the 15th light dragoons. . . .
>
> The procession went on at its outset at a quick rate: and the capture having been made at an earlier hour than the crowd had been in the habit of assembling, the event was not immediately or generally known. The baronet had passed up Albemarle-street before a cry was set up, "They have taken him—they have dragged him out of his house!" The cry spread immediately far and wide; and an immense crowd soon attended the cavalcade. . . .
>
> During the whole of this period the populace did not commit much violence; they chiefly vented their rage in hissing and hooting the troops, and contented themselves on the other hand with huzzaing sir Francis. Upon the return of the troops, however, several acts of outrage were resorted to by the multitude which had continued to increase. The soldiers were pelted with mud and stones in great quantities . . . they determined to endure the assault no longer, and charged the multitude sword in hand . . . several people fell. . . . Several were wounded. . . .

A flood of deep and genuine indignation was now poured out upon the heads of the Parliamentary majority, and in a petitioning campaign, led by the City, by Westminster, and by Middlesex, the majority and the Ministry it supported were given a piece of the "public's" mind in very vigorous language.[2] Military disasters abroad and "oppression" by an incapable Government at home were treated as the inevitable results of a political system which allowed corruption and sinecurism so much scope, and the City's second petition, for example, denounced Perceval and demanded "an immediate and radical reform in the commons house of

[1] *New Annual Register*, 1810, Principal Occurrences, pp. 47–53.

[2] H. Jephson, *The Platform*, i, 340. There were petitions, amongst others, from Worcester, Canterbury, Hull, Nottingham, Coventry, Sheffield and Berkshire. The petition from Middlesex and the first petition from the City were, after angry debates, denied admission to the table of the House, Perceval, for example, denouncing the Middlesex petition as a deliberate and unparalleled insult to the House.

parliament" with almost equal vigour. And the flood of petition-indignation can hardly be said to have stopped before preparations were being made for a tremendous demonstration to accompany the end of the Parliamentary Session, on June 21st, and the automatic release which it would bestow on Burdett and Gale Jones. Ministers, in fact, saw reason to order an imposing display of military force to be made that day, great numbers of Volunteers were called out for duty, and even a park of artillery was held ready for action in St. James's Park. But the huge masses of the capital's population, who gathered in the streets on June 21st, were in no insurrectionary temper but desired rather to cheer Sir Francis in a holiday spirit of rejoicing at the release of one whom they regarded as the Hampden of his age. Here is one contemporary account of the crowds and their temper:[1]

> The town was all in a hustle during the whole of the forenoon.... The fineness of the day afforded a favourable opportunity for the populace to assemble on Tower-Hill, which they did at a very early hour. Crowds were collected there at eight in the morning, and all along the line of streets from the Tower to Sir Francis Burdett's house in Piccadilly, every point was thickly planted with people towards the afternoon. Every window and elevated station was occupied.... In every convenient situation, waggons, carts, and chairs were filled with well-dressed females.... Numerous bodies of the Westminster electors began to repair to the Tower about one o'clock. A party of about 500, from Soho, with blue cockades and colours flying... marched two and two, and invited every passenger whom they met to join them.... The one body was preceded by a military band of music, and three blue silk banners. On the first was inscribed, "The constitution"; on the second, "Trial by jury"; and on the third, "Burdett and freedom". About three hundred gentlemen assembled on horseback in different parts of the city, and arrived on Tower-hill about two o'clock. Among them we observed major Cartwright, and a number of gentlemen who compose the Westminster committee. In the Minories the carriages were arranged about two hundred in number. There were about twenty gentlemen's carriages, the remainder were stage and hackney coaches... crowded outside and in with men and women, who wore blue favours and other tokens of their attachment to sir Francis Burdett....

But the great London crowds of June 21st were not destined to rejoice in the triumphant procession of the 200 carriages, the 300 horsemen, the 500 Westminster electors marching two and two under garter-blue banners, and all the rest of the pomp that had

[1] *New Annual Register*, 1810, Principal Occurrences, pp. 75–7.

been prepared. At half past four the word began to spread that the people's hero had deserted them and had allowed himself to be persuaded to leave the Tower by water instead of going by road to receive the plaudits of those who had upheld his cause during his imprisonment.[1] Whatever the reason for Burdett's procedure, a great many of the "people", robbed of an eagerly-awaited spectacle, chose to consider that they had been abandoned by their hero, possibly because he feared the consequences to himself of any trouble that might break out between the troops and the "people". For a time at least Ministers seemed to have some justification for holding that Burdett and the "Jacobins" had ceased to be a menace;[2] and as there was a case too, for claiming that the more regular Opposition's attachment to Catholic Emancipation, if not to Parliamentary Reform, ran directly counter to the wishes of the great majority in England and Scotland, Government's main problem, at the end of the Session, appeared to consist in winning somewhat heartier support from the "independents". Though hardly so critical of Ministers as they had been at the beginning of the Session, the "independents" were still, towards its end, making Government's principal division problems. When, for example, Bankes, the "independents' " principal exponent of the need for sinecure-extinction, twice divided against Government supporters on May 31st, he defeated them by 105 against 95 and 111 against 100.[3] And when, on the previous day, the Opposition Front Bencher, Tierney, had countered Government's motion for £7000 per annum for the Duke of Brunswick with the demand that the money should be taken from the immense sums classed as the Crown's Droits of Admiralty, there was enough "independent" sympathy to allow him the respectable division of 75 against 101.

[1] *New Annual Register*, 1810, Principal Occurrences, pp. 76–7: "After a long and anxious suspense . . . a soldier in the Tower called several times through a speaking trumpet—'He is gone by water'; but no person seemed to give any credit to what he had said. . . . Some asserted that sir Francis Burdett never would depart by water, and disappoint the good intentions of his friends, unless he were compelled to do so . . . ."

[2] *Ibid.*, History, p. 237: "Discontent and dissatisfaction began to appear among the multitude; they had assembled in the expectation of a show and a procession, in which their favourite public character was to appear . . . the disappointment came upon them quite unawares: that it did not lead them to acts of violence and fury, says much for their moderation . . . that it did not make an impression permanently disadvantageous to sir Francis Burdett proves the strong hold he had. . . ."

[3] *Cobbett's Parliamentary Debates*, May 31st.

During the Recess there were sufficiently ominous signs of financial and commercial strain to make it certain that Opposition and "independents" would continue awkward and, sometimes, combined pressure for "economy" and finance "reform".[1] And Bankes's "independent" prophecy that the continued Ministerial refusal of sinecure-reduction and of a permanent ban on appointments in reversion would end by driving a majority of the "respectable classes" into the Parliamentary Reform camp,[2] seemed nearer realisation when, on October 22nd, "a very full meeting of the freeholders of the county of Kent" gave a "moderate" lead on Parliamentary Reform, which many must have found more attractive than the "notorious" manifestos issued in the name of the City, of Westminster and of Middlesex whenever "radical reformers" obtained control. From one passage of the Kent Petition it would appear that many Englishmen still feared that, under Ministerial direction, Wellington's army in the Peninsula would come to grief. As Wellington was apparently being forced to abandon, not only Spain but all Portugal as well, outside the tiny area lying between the Lines of Torres Vedras and the sea, there were many who doubted whether anything better than a larger and costlier Corunna could now be expected. But the Kent Reform Petition should be allowed to speak for itself. Here is its weightiest section:[3]

We are of opinion that your honourable house is at this time by no means a fair representation of the people; and from the manner in which a large portion of the individual members obtain and secure

[1] The financial strain was made obvious by heavy falls in the value of British Government securities. And on the commercial strains, the *New Annual Register* thought fit to write a rather pessimistic chapter from which the following is an extract: "a great proportion of mercantile capital was afloat on rash speculations, the success of which depended on other things; on the relaxation by Bonaparte of his plans against our commerce, or on the practicability of eluding his vigilance. The state of this country and America also still further increased the rage for speculation. In consequence of disputes between them, all commercial intercourse had either been suspended, or carried on in such a manner as to be inadequate.... This uncertain and inadequate supply, of course, gave rise to great profits; while the prospects that the differences would be accommodated, having appeared more than once very near and certain, tempted our merchants to prepare for a trade so long interrupted.... But the disputes ... still continued ... and the merchants found themselves with their capital locked up, and their circumstances embarrassed if not completely ruined." The *New Annual Register* also blamed the banks for financing these speculations, at the public's expense, by over-issuing bank-notes regardless of the depreciation involved.

[2] See quotation at the head of the chapter.

[3] *New Annual Register*, 1810, Public Papers, p. 184.

their seats in your honourable house, we cannot but infer, that the high and sacred office, intended for the public service, is frequently sought for and procured by unconstitutional means, and is too often perverted from its original design, and rendered subservient to private ends. To this cause we ascribe the greatest part of the national calamities we now have to deplore; the mean principles and narrow views which have too long governed the councils of the cabinet; the false ambition and little intrigues of its members; the continuance of a system of expenditure, lavish beyond example; the many disgraceful expeditions, in which the blood and treasure of our country have been too prodigally wasted; the decisions of your honourable house, in direct opposition to the general sentiments of the nation; the unwillingness hitherto evinced by your honourable house to promote inquiry into, or correct abuses in, the representation. . . .

As matters turned out, the immediate future of British politics was determined neither by Reform petitions nor by Peninsular retreats but by the declaration of Royal incapacity to which the Ministers were forced on November 1, 1810. The agony of losing a favourite daughter, by a painful and lingering disease, had broken the King's oft-shaken sanity to a point at which even Lord Eldon, who had, in the past, frequently allowed himself the benefit of the doubt, dared no longer apply the Great Seal to State documents on the assumption that such was the Royal will. The first result of the Royal incapacity was a nominal reassembly of Parliament on November 1st because a previous prorogation, which it had been fully intended to extend, ran out that day. So suddenly had the position arisen that few but official members could have been present in Parliament, and they apparently carried fourteen-day adjournments in both Houses without the slightest trouble. When, on November 15th, Ministers re-appeared with the request for another fourteen-day adjournment, they found Opposition in both Houses a good deal more restive and critical despite their assurance that a Royal recovery might well take place within that period. Grey led the critics in the Lords and Whitbread in the Commons, but as neither would assume the responsibility of dividing against Government on so delicate a matter, it was left to Burdett bluntly to assert that Ministers seemed resolved to prolong their tenure of office, whatever the danger to the country from the suspension of the sovereign power in such critical times. In the long debate and division which Burdett forced on, Ministers, though victorious by 343 votes

against 58,[1] were roughly enough handled to make a change of tactics necessary when, on November 29th, they reappeared before Parliament to make yet another request for fourteen-day adjournments and to affirm once more the probability of a speedy Royal recovery. Armed though they now were with physicians' reports, they found Grenville in the Lords prepared to demand a Parliamentary examination of the physicians and Opposition in the Commons urging quicker preparations for a Regency. And after Opposition's divisions of 56 against 88 in the Lords and 137 against 230 in the Commons, Ministers found it impossible, at the expiry of yet another fortnight, merely to repeat the request for adjournments. On December 13th, therefore, they agreed to have Select Committees, one from each House, to examine the physicians, and on December 20th Reports from these Select Committees faced the full Houses.

Though Ministers now recognised there could be no further delay in preparing to set up a Regency, vested in the Prince of Wales, angry party controversy broke out on the large, if temporary, limitations Ministers proposed to put, by Bill, on the Royal prerogatives to be wielded by the Prince Regent.[2] As many of the Opposition leaders had long been the Prince's personal friends and he was expected to put them in office as soon as he had the power, Opposition fought the Prince's battles manfully almost to the moment that the Regency Bill became law on February 5th. Indeed, with the help of allies ranging from Burdett and Cobbett to courtiers, saluting the rising sun, some apparently prophetic defeats were inflicted on Ministers.[3] Yet, when a new Parliamentary Session opened, under the Prince's Regency, on February 12th, Perceval and his friends were still in office, partly, it would seem, because of Opposition's own divisions and hesitations[4] but partly

[1] *Cobbett's Parliamentary Debates*, November 15, 1810. It was on this occasion that so sober and respected an Oppositionist as Sir Samuel Romilly considered any adjournment for more than twenty-four hours improper.

[2] Cf. *Ibid.*, December 31, 1810, for the large suspension proposed, for a year, of the Regent's power of conferring peerages, bestowing offices for life and making grants of Crown property, real or personal.

[3] *Ibid.*, January 1, and 2, 1811, for two defeats of the Ministers, the first, in a division of 213–226 and the second, in one of 214–217. The ex-Ministers, Canning and Castlereagh, with their friends, were among Ministers' leading problems.

[4] *New Annual Register*, 1811, History, p. 207, for a presumed division of Opposition between a party of Lord Grenville, a party of those who regarded themselves as heirs of the Fox tradition, and a party, headed by Lord Moira and Sheridan, more personally attached to the Prince of Wales.

also because the Prince flinched before the prospect of beginning the Regency with wholesale dismissals. Opposition, of course, still had the brightest hopes of being called to power as soon as real difficulties overtook Ministers, and, during the early months of 1811, with Wellington apparently confined to a mere strip of Portugal, more and more of Spain passing into French hands, relations with America at breaking-point, and Ireland outraged by another demonstration of Ministers' Protestant "firmness",[1] Government's life seemed destined to be a short one. The City of London, indeed, with old grudges against Perceval, called to the new Regent to have done with him at once and offered, in flattering language, almost an alliance of people and Regent against the Ministers and majority who had oppressed and wronged them both. Here are extracts from the Address voted to the new Regent by the City, where, thanks to the feeling against Perceval, "radical reformers" had taken control of the Common Council:[2]

Whilst we offer to your royal highness our sincere condolence . . . it is with heartfelt consolation that, in common with all ranks of our fellow subjects, we behold in the person of your royal highness a prince highly endowed . . . a prince who has so greatly endeared himself to the people by his moderation and forbearance . . . and the attachment he has so uniformly shown to their rights and liberties.

Had indeed the desire and expectation of the united kingdom been realised, by vesting in your royal highness the full powers of the executive authority, we should have had just cause for congratulation. Far be it from us, *insulted* as the corporation . . . *has recently been* by the servants of the crown; far be it from us to indulge in complaints of grievances peculiar to ourselves. . . . It is of general grievances . . . of *accumulated and ever-accumulating taxation*, rendered doubly grievous *by the oppressive mode of exaction . . . of the improvident expenditure* of the immense sums thus wrung from industry and labour; of the waste of life, and of treasure, in ill-contrived and ill-conducted expeditions; of the attempts which . . . especially in the last three years, have been made . . . to crush public liberty in all its branches, and especially the liberty of freely discussing the conduct of public men. . . .

Can we refrain from humbly expressing our complaints, when we have seen those ministers who have so long *usurped* the royal authority,

[1] On February 12th, Ministers' Irish Secretary, Wellesley Pole, directed a circular letter of dubious legality to the sheriffs and chief magistrates of all the Irish counties, requiring them to arrest, under the Irish Convention Act of 1793, all who took part in a projected election of Catholic delegates. The legality and propriety of the circular letter were soon, of course, disputed in Parliament.

[2] *New Annual Register*, 1811, Public Papers, pp. 201–9. The City had previously petitioned strongly for an unfettered Regency.

and who, it is now discovered, have *by practising the most criminal deception upon the parliament and the people*, carried on the government during his majesty's former incapacity, exerting their influence . . . evincing the most ungrounded jealousy and mistrust of your royal highness. . . .

Numerous other grievances we forbear even to mention; but there is one so prominent in the odiousness of its nature . . . that we are unable to refrain from marking it out as a particular object of our complaint and of your royal highness's virtuous abhorrence—*the present representation in the commons house of parliament*, a ready instrument in the hands of the minister for the time being, whether for the purpose of nullifying the just prerogatives of the crown, or of insulting and oppressing the people. . . .

Twenty years earlier, and with the Fox of 1790 at his elbow, the Prince might have been tempted by such a "popular" alliance as was here offered. Even as it was, he thought fit to give a gracious reply, and, by ordering the insertion of the City Address in the *Gazette*, to stimulate the hopes of "reformers".[1] But the Prince was apparently only making a gesture of courtesy and giving a demonstration of his power to Perceval and Perceval's friends. He thought fit to repeat the lesson a little later on a matter of patronage and to revive reformers' hopes once more.[2] But how little the Prince and the "reformers" had in common was soon to be proved by his determination to reappoint his brother, the Duke of York, to the Commandership-in-Chief. The appointment, gazetted on May 25th, was the undoing of the "reformers' " principal triumph for a long period, and yet they had, through City Addresses and Burdett speeches, committed themselves so

[1] Cf. *Ibid.*, History, p. 211, for the almost complete lack of precedent for the insertion of so fiercely anti-Ministerialist an Address in the *London Gazette*. It was plain that a direct order from the Prince must have been given.

[2] Cf. *Ibid.*, "Even, however, amidst the decline of their expectations, the regent occasionally showed himself the enemy of corruption; and in no one instance more strongly and pointedly than in a rebuke he gave to Mr. Perceval. A place of considerable emolument . . . became vacant; for this place, a duke just come of age solicited the premier in behalf of a near relation. Mr. Perceval accordingly proposed the appointment to the regent. The prince objected, that the candidate was already in possession of considerable public emolument. . . . The premier urged his relationship to a noble duke who possessed great parliamentary influence, and who, it could not be expected, would exert that influence in favour of ministers, unless they complied with his wishes. . . . Upon this avowal, the prince is said to have expressed in strong terms his indignation, and to have declared unequivocally . . . that he would always look to the public interest in such appointments, and not to the interest or power of the ministry. This declaration, so manly and patriotic, revived the almost exhausted and worn out hopes and expectations of the reformists. . . ."

thoroughly to trust in the Prince, that a Burdettite agitation was felt to be impossible and the lead in ineffectual protest was taken by some elements of the "regular Opposition", uncountenanced by their leaders.[1] It was later considered by some that, in silently abandoning the "nation" on the Duke of York issue, the Opposition leaders, though intending to conciliate the Prince, forfeited their last prospects of power because they lost their last claim to popular support.[2] The "public" and the streets had never liked Opposition's apparently spiritless belief in the military invincibility of Napoleon; its constant tendency to justify the detested "Yankees" in their objection to the Orders in Council; or, finally, the selfish aspects of its late agitation against the indispensable, if depreciated, Bank-note currency.[3] By July 26th, the date of the Parliamentary prorogation, the once-black prospects of the Perceval Ministry were certainly regarded as improved. In despite of the jeremiads of the Opposition, the French had been driven from Portugal and the last French colonial holding of the Mauritius had been captured. The "public", too, approved the refusal of Ministers to budge before the ill-will or threats of the Americans, and the Regent was beginning to be tempted, despite his past "grievances", by the thought of enjoying, as soon as he was permanently installed in the Executive power, the same courtier-like deference to his wishes as Ministers had bestowed upon George III.

[1] *New Annual Register*, 1811, History, p. 212: "It was amusing and instructive to observe the conduct of the opposition and reformists on this occasion. The former, knowing that the act of the duke's re-instatement came from the prince himself . . . either were silent, or attacked the measure in very feeble and measured censure. The reformists, having openly and repeatedly declared their belief that the prince was an enemy to corruption . . . had no courage or principle sufficient to read their recantation. . . ."

[2] Cf. *The Times*, December 13, 1811: "From the moment that they deserted the public cause, by 'sneaking off' in the affair of the Duke of York's restitution —from that moment they became contemptible to the nation—every one saw clearly what their views were."

[3] The *Memoirs of Francis Horner*, the Opposition member who had obtained and presided over the Bullion Committee of 1810 and who had, in 1811, tried to get the House and the country to undertake a return to the gold-standard, within two years, show the better side of Opposition's objections to a policy of currency-drift until a period so indefinite as "six months after the ratification of a definite treaty of peace". But great Opposition landowners, with lands let, on long lease, at rents which certainly had not been calculated on the basis of Bank-note pounds, depreciated 25 per cent from gold-value, had private reasons for objecting to the currency position. And one Opposition Peer, Lord King, was just causing a problem by announcing to his tenants that he would not take Bank-notes in payment of his rent save at the discount which marked their depreciation from gold value.

From the Parliamentary point of view, Ministers' position probably improved during the Recess. If troublesome legal problems arose in Ireland, from official zeal to restrain, within the oppressive bounds of the Convention Act of 1793, new Catholic preparations to petition for Emancipation,[1] the "independent" Parliamentarian had much to set over against this in Ministers' favour. Wellington's forces, for instance, struck hard and successfully in aid of Spain at Merida in October, while, in mid-December, there came the great news of the fall of Java and the establishment of Britain in the vast East India Empire which Napoleon had annexed when absorbing the Dutch homeland in the course of 1810.[2] Then, the reports of Franco-Russian tension on the European continent were numerous and well-grounded enough to portend nothing but good for Britain.[3] From such reports as these, Perceval's position could only improve both as against Opposition and against the aspiring Foreign Secretary, the Marquess Wellesley, who would have liked to find the occasion to displace a Prime Minister whom he regarded as a mere House of Commons hack, stupidly prejudiced on the Catholic question, dangerously detested by Opposition and completely blind to the large-scale strategy that would have to be employed to bring Napoleon down.[4]

Just before Parliament reassembled on January 7, 1812, for a Session bound to be dominated by the need for putting the Regency on a more permanent foundation, *The Times* published a curious report. It suggested how Perceval had come to terms with the Prince Regent on a basis which not only baulked Wellesley but assured Perceval the initiative in such Coalition negotiations

[1] Cf. *New Annual Register*, 1811, History, pp. 268–83, for the details of the contest between the Irish Catholic community and the Administration. One high point came on August 9th, when five Catholics were arrested for being elected delegates or for having aided in delegation procedure in violation of the Convention Act, and another came on November 21st, when Dr. Sheridan, the first of the alleged delegates was put on trial. The "Not Guilty" verdict returned, after a trial that had caused a very tense atmosphere in Dublin, did not end matters, for when a committee of Catholic delegates then began to meet, the Crown proceeded to the arrest of two Catholic noblemen who had taken the chair, Lords Fingal and Netterville.

[2] Cf. *The Times*, December 17, 1811, for the announcement of the fall of Java. The fighting, of course, had taken place a long time before, in August, and the news had come through with what was for those days remarkable speed.

[3] *The Times* of October 7th, 9th, and 10th had already contained rumours and reports of a possible journey by Napoleon to Northern Europe, in view of the "undecided" state of Russian politics and his anxieties in regard to Denmark and Sweden.

[4] See next chapter for the open breach that soon came.

with the Prince's old Opposition friends as were in meditation. The picture, given in *The Times* of January 3rd is worth repeating, and here it is:

An intrigue, it will be recollected, was said to have been some time ago discovered in the Cabinet: the object of which was the removal of Mr. Perceval, in whose place was to be substituted the Marquis Wellesley: and Mr. Canning was to be restored to his old station, just quitted by the noble Marquis. The approaching meeting of Parliament afforded Mr. Perceval an happy opportunity of ascertaining at once both the firmness of his own personal position against his private assailants, if such there were: and that of his party against the open antagonists of the whole. He is accordingly said to have waited upon the Prince Regent about a month ago; and to have represented to his royal highness the propriety of a final determination respecting the persons whom he meant to fill the chief office in Administration, as it was requisite that gentlemen in the confidence of the acting sovereign should advise the speech for the opening of the Session. The Prince Regent is then said to have declared that he meant to retain the present Ministry: and to consult with Mr. Perceval as the head. . . . The outline of the proposed speech was, in consequence, read to his royal highness, whose approbation it received exclusive only of the passage relating to Ireland, the interests of which country the Prince desired might be retained as the subject of fuller consideration and arrangement. . . .

We cannot help ourselves suggesting the doubt to which we before alluded, as to the probability of Mr. Perceval's continuing to act with the Marquis Wellesley had he really discovered that it was the intention of that nobleman to have removed him from the head of the Administration. Matters being, however, thus said to be officially arranged . . . we have heard with considerable surprize, that a communication has nevertheless been subsequently made to some of the leading members of Opposition, assuring them that the sentiments of the Prince Regent still remained unaltered towards them, of which they should speedily have satisfactory proofs. What can be meant by this? Is a coalition of men generally intended: or only an acquiescence of both parties in one particular measure, which being disposed of by the existing Ministers without opposition, his Royal Highness may be free to choose his future servants among those towards whom his political bias and personal esteem have hitherto been thought chiefly to incline? We are unwilling to believe that so distressing a subject as that of large debts will be brought before Parliament: but if it should, we will still not credit the suggestion, that both parties are capable of violating their sense of duty through the love of place. . . .

The information of *The Times* was already known to be exceptionally good, and, as will have been seen, its political surmises on the possible influence on Cabinet-making of the

Prince Regent's large debts, showed both a shrewdness and an "independence", likely to be very pleasing to the "public". In point of fact, in the then temper of the nation, no Cabinet, however courtly, could have proposed outright payments of the debts by the "public", and financial plans on the Prince's behalf had therefore to take indirect forms, for which, as *The Times* suspected, the interested acquiescence of the Opposition was being sought. As the financial basis, planned for the permanent Regency, became one of the leading Sessional issues, discussion of that topic shall be left to the next chapter, earmarked largely for such business. And in the overwhelmingly political context of such a chapter as this, it would not be proper to do more than notice that the most startling activity of the "populace", during the winter of 1811–12, was not directly political at all but consisted in the organised machine smashing known as "Luddism".[1] This, too, will be treated in its own place, and this chapter shall end with a political pronouncement, made on behalf of the "people" by Burdett at the opening of Parliament. After the Regent's Speech had been read and the Commons had returned to their own chamber, Burdett rose to his feet before the member who had been officially designated, according to custom, to move a Ministerial Address of Thanks for the gracious speech from the Throne. The Speaker decided that the member for Westminster could not be denied the floor, and Burdett proceeded to move an Address of his own, which his brother-member, Lord Cochrane, had agreed to second. Burdett's speech on this occasion, though airing a medley of "popular" grievances, seemed so unpractical and so little related to the hard facts of the international situation that the "regular Opposition" had little more to say for it than the Ministerialists.[2] Typical extracts from a summary shall be given in order to illustrate "popular politics" at a peculiarly uninviting stage of their development:[3]

> The circumstances of the times called for the truth. . . . He was the less willing to omit this opportunity of addressing the regent, as his magnanimous character differed so widely from those princes of whom we read in history, that their delight was in mischief and despotism. . . .

[1] *The Times* began to have serious notices of "outrages" in Nottinghamshire on November 22nd and 23rd.

[2] Burdett and Cochrane found, on a division, only one supporter for their Address.

[3] *New Annual Register*, 1812, History, pp. 9–11.

In tracing the calamities of the country, he must revert to a very remote period. Not only were the last eighteen years more calamitous than the preceding, but the transactions of the whole of the present reign, were such as must convince the most thoughtless, that the system must have been radically bad.... The causes ... were to be found in that detestation of the principles of liberty, which had been equally the origin of the present unfortunate war, and of that with America. He should consider the present speech as peculiarly the speech of ministers, as it talked of prolonging the struggle.... It held out hopes, which no man in his senses could entertain, of the final success of our arms in that [Iberian] peninsula.... It was true that general Hill had gallantly surprised a small division of the enemy; still the French were making regular and rapid strides toward the subjugation of the country.... The cause of this failure was the radically vicious principle of supporting despotism in this instance as we did all over the world—the attempt to support desperate, falling ... states, instead of the good old British reason of maintaining the cause of freedom ... it was a serious fact, that the inquisition remained in existence in those parts only of the country of which the English had possession. But there was a curious contrast.... We were fighting strenuously to maintain the catholic religion in that country of our Spanish allies; though ... our more valuable allies at home—the Irish—a generous, brave, and long-suffering people—were ... withholden from their best and dearest rights ... our present oligarchy was one of the worst species—not a few of the best men, and of the greatest interest in the state, but an oligarchy of rotten boroughs.... There existed a system of taxation, the deprivations of which prevented the strictest industry from obtaining a livelihood, and generated pauperism throughout the land—a pauperism aggravated by pillage. Besides, the whole land was in a state of terror. Military possession was taken of the country; dépôts, and barracks, and fortifications were formed; and mercenary Germans and foreigners were scattered over the kingdom.... Another grievance ... was the system of military discipline ... which subjected every soldier for the most trifling misconduct to be corporally punished at the miserable caprice of almost every officer.... He then touched upon the liberty of the press.... The first efforts of despots were invariably directed against this ... and the intentions of the present ministers might be collected from the unprecedented number of informations which their attorney-general had filed *ex officio*.... He should now ... move an address to the regent, which should ... trace all the calamities, external and internal, all the various grievances ... to a want of a free and equal representation of the people in parliament....

CHAPTER XVI

LIVERPOOL BECOMES PRIME MINISTER, 1812

T. W. Coke of Holkham Hall elected M.P. for Norfolk, October 1812.

"Mr. Coke assured his constituents that a private and domestic life was the most congenial to his disposition—that for a political one he had never any ambition, nor had he been induced so long to hold a share in the representation of the county, from any other notion than that of keeping out those who, devoted to the present Administration, would have contributed by their votes to increase the public burthens. Mr. Coke then took a review of his political life from his Parliamentary début in 1776 to the present time. He had commenced a public character in the true Whig principles established at the Revolution; influenced by them, the rights of the people had ever been more dear to him than the honour of the Crown. . . . Consistently with these sentiments, he had opposed Lord North's American War, for which he had been called a 'rebel'; he afterwards opposed Mr. Pitt's War of the French Revolution and was branded with the epithet of 'Jacobin'; and lastly he had advocated the cause of the Catholics, by which means Mr. Perceval's cry of 'No Popery' had been raised against him. . . . Mr. Coke said, as this was in all probability the last time he should have the honour to offer himself to be their Representative (Here there was a general cry of No! No!) he thought it right to add a few words as to the public measures he intended to support. He should be a decided advocate for Peace—a safe and honourable one he most fervently wished for, and was for immediately making an attempt to obtain it, and he strongly urged the County to petition Parliament on the subject; he had completely made up his mind that the desire of the Catholics ought to be granted; and was also for the repeal of the Test Acts and every species of religious restriction. Lastly, whether in or out of Parliament, he would ever be found a zealous supporter of a radical reform in the House of Commons."

The Times, October 29, 1812.

From Burdett's election advertisement in *The Times*, October 8, 1812.

"Nine Hundred Millions of Debt—inland fortresses under the name of barracks—an army of German and other foreign

mercenaries—an army of spies and informers—of tax and excise agents—an inquisition of private property—A phantom for a King—a degraded aristocracy—an oppressed people—a confiding Parliament—irresponsible Ministers—a corrupt and intimidated Press—pensioned Justices—packed Juries—A House of Commons, the members of which had, agreeably to a return . . . in 1808, put into their own pockets £178,994 a year in salaries, sinecures and pensions, besides their staff appointments and commissions, and besides the money received by their wives and other relations. . . .

"Lord Arden, brother to the late Minister . . . received from his sinecure £38,574 a year. . . . The sinecures of the Chief Justice would keep 300 families. . . . Besides the sums given to the Princes out of the Droits of the Admiralty, the King's private property in the funds exempted from Income Tax: and Mr. Addington . . . in 1801 misapplying upwards of £50,000 . . . as a loan to the Duke of York, only a small part of which has been repaid, and that without interest, what noble examples they set us of making sacrifices!"

An Irish Whig success against Government. *The Times*, November 13th.

"Clonmell, November 4th (Tipperary Co. Election).

"The mornings at Clonmell afford such displays of popular eloquence, as perhaps, have never been paralleled in the British Empire, whether in matter, manner or occasion. About 11 o'clock the streets are thronged with freeholders—the Court booths crowded—the partisans anxious. . . . Suddenly the sound of carriages is heard—the cries of thousands follow . . . followed by a grand and imposing procession of coaches, chaises, and various vehicles, bearing freeholders in the interest of Mathew and Prittie. Each coach is decorated with boughs of oak, sycamore etc.; the heads of the horses are similarly adorned; bugles and French horns are sounded by the outside passengers. . . . All the neighbouring windows are stuck thick with company. . . . In the midst of this scene General Mathew comes forth—mounts the very summit of the largest coach, waves his hand and becomes uncovered. Instantly the music ceases, the din is hushed. . . . The General from this lofty rostrum sends forth stentorian notes to the wondering populars—he dwells forcibly on every topic suited to an independent meeting in Ireland. . . . He is followed with great effect by Mr. Prittie. Many thousands attend these *morning lectures* . . . this grand scene is peculiarly favourable for free animadversions upon public men—accordingly all the Ministerial characters come in for their share by turns. . . ."

In the first days of the 1812 Session there were some interesting exchanges on general policy between Opposition and Ministers. Perceval met, with vigour, Opposition's continued pessimism on the final war prospects in the Peninsula, and in regard to American dangers he was almost over-confident. America's reprisal for the Orders in Council had already, by virtually ending British trade with the United States, so added to the harm done to British export industries by the Continental System, that the "Luddite" riots among the operatives and the great Oppositionist petitioning, preparing against the Orders, by the manufacturing towns, become the more understandable.[1] But in regard to American threats of war, Perceval thought fit to take as bold a line as the following:[2]

> As to war with America, there is no man who would more sincerely deplore such a calamity than myself. I know it would be a great evil to us, but I know also it would be a greater evil to America. I wish for the progressive prosperity of America. I would look to her wealth, and strength, and commerce, as accessary to those of the British empire. I should be sorry to see America subdued—I should indeed lament to see America destroyed—(here Mr. Whitbread repeated the word "destroyed?") When I say destroyed, I certainly cannot be thought to mean mere physical annihilation; but if the total loss of commerce to a commercial power be not destructive, I know not what can be so.

There were other warm exchanges on Perceval's policy of contriving to find offices with which to bind members to his cause, and two rising Oppositionists, Creevey and Brougham, made a special point against the Paymastership of Widows' Pensions, bestowed, by Perceval, on the Regent's friend, Colonel M'Mahon, despite the fact that two Commissions had reported on it as a sinecure, ripe for abolition at the first vacancy.[3] But the great

[1] The life and soul of the petitioning movement seems to have been Roscoe, the Oppositionist ex-M.P. for Liverpool, and a banker in that town, well-connected, for various reasons, with the mercantile elements in Lancashire, Yorkshire and the Midlands. Strong support was also forthcoming from the City Radicals, led by Waithman, and Brougham had undertaken to represent the movement in Parliament.

[2] Cf. *New Annual Register*, 1812, History, p. 19, and *Cobbett's Parliamentary Debates*, January 8th.

[3] *Annual Register*, 1812, History, pp. 6–7. This publication obviously considered that the M'Mahon appointment had been one of the ways in which Perceval had won over the Regent. The opening attack, by Opposition elements,

business of the earlier part of the Session was introduced on January 16th when Perceval submitted his plan for financing the Regency on a less temporary basis. £100,000 of Crown income, from the Civil List, was to be set aside to provide a reduced Household at Windsor round the stricken monarch; an extra £10,000 per annum was to be provided for his Consort on the supposition that her husband's reduced state would throw extra expenses upon her; and, finally, Privy Purse expenses to the amount of £60,000 per annum were to continue as George III would presumably have desired them. All this apparently meant that £170,000 of the income, normally in the hands of the Crown, was being withdrawn from the Regent's control, and Perceval suggested that if Parliament added £70,000 per annum to the remainder, something like justice would be done seeing that £50,000 per annum of the Regent's income as Prince of Wales was going to be counted, by arrangement, towards his income as Regent, while the fact that his family responsibilities were small, when compared with his father's, constituted the justification for leaving even his adjusted income less, by £50,000 per annum, than George III's in the past.[1] There was compensation, perhaps, in the cash-grant of £100,000 to the Regent which Perceval proposed as a species of "outfit" allowance and as a reimbursement of the expenditure the Regent had already undertaken, during the temporary Regency, to surround himself with the greater state, proper to the circumstances.

Opposition found a good deal to criticise both in what the plan included and what it left out of account. One major part of the plan which aroused some resentment was that which set up a "second Court" at Windsor, practically in the hands of the Queen and with £170,000 per annum at its disposal. Indeed, aided, doubtless, by Opposition's growing conviction that the Regent had deserted to Perceval, there was even some questioning of the necessity for the Queen's extra £10,000 per annum[2] and the

on January 9th, must be taken as proof that some sections of Opposition now considered that the Prince had gone over to their opponents. And though the attack was repelled on this occasion, the fact that the appointment was made, in the teeth of two responsible recommendations, one twenty-nine years back and the other four, took it on to success later, when "independents" had joined in the contest.

[1] *Cobbett's Parliamentary Debates*, January 16, 1812, Perceval.

[2] Opposition's leader in the Commons, George Ponsonby, made this point immediately. "There was," he said, "another part of the statement of the right honourable gentleman, to which he could not help adverting, and that was,

wisdom of spending £100,000 per annum on maintaining the state of a monarch, who was unable to appreciate what was being done for him.[1] Another indication that all was not well between Prince and Opposition was the *caveat* uttered by one Opposition leader against permitting the Regent's "outfit" allowance to form a precedent which would justify a future sovereign's demand for a similar allowance on his accession to the throne. It was pointed out, too, that the Prince's revenue as Prince of Wales was £120,000 per annum so that, even with a deduction of £50,000 per annum to Regency account, £70,000 remained in his hands and his resources exceeded, by that much, the sum Ministers had affected to present to the House.[2] Moreover, there were a variety of other Royal incomes which had been partly or wholly left out of account by Ministers. And if there was no audible grumbling about Ministers' proposed use of Duchy of Lancaster income and possibly, also, Scottish revenue surplus, for such a purpose as paying for the King's medical treatment, there was quite a hubbub about Ministers' attitude in regard to other Crown incomes. Thus, at the very time when Ministers were preparing to come to the House for additional incomes for the Regent's unmarried sisters on the ground that they could not be expected to reside for ever with their mother, a huge capital sum of eight millions, accumulated since 1792 as Droits of Admiralty, was being jealously guarded almost as private Crown property while there was a similar attitude towards the handsome yield from the 4½ per cent Customs duty collected in Barbados and the Leeward Islands on

that on account of the diminished domestic state of the king, a smaller number of coaches and horses would be rendered necessary, and £10,000 additional should, on this account, be granted to her majesty the queen; that is because his majesty requires fewer coaches and horses, an additional income became necessary to the queen. But how could the diminution of the expense necessary to his majesty create an additional expense to the queen? . . ." Cf. *Cobbett Parliamentary Debates*, January 16, 1812.

[1] *Ibid.*, for Tierney's speaking. A slightly different version renders one passage thus: "When he examined the list of those who were to constitute the queen's court, it was impossible not to smile when he observed the number of officers proposed—the master of the robes, grooms of the stole, lords of state, equerries, &c. And in order to take care of the private property of his majesty, three new officers were thought fit to be created. . . . Could any man be so blind as not to see the drift of the right honourable gentleman in the disposal of all this influence. . . ."

[2] Cf. *New Annual Register*, 1812, p. 46, for Tierney on January 27th: "It was necessary to add here, that his royal highness enjoyed an income of £120,000 of which sum only £50,000 was to be paid into the civil list, leaving £70,000 in his hands, so that in fact the total amount of money at the disposal of the prince was £20,000 more than was enjoyed by his father. . . ."

Crown account.[1] The fact that the Crown had, of late, been spending over a million a year on Civil List accounts, instead of the £907,000 budgeted for, and having the difference made up from the Admiralty Droits, was another thing that Opposition did not like, and for several reasons. Throughout George III's reign, Opposition had always connected over-drawn Crown revenues with heavy political expenditure on Crown account, and for Ministers to meet these over-drafts from such national "property" as Admiralty Droits seemed, to Opposition, a double imposition on the country. First, improper influences might be brought to bear on politics, and then the cost of its own political corruption might be imposed on the nation by paying Civil List debts from Admiralty Droits. Sir Francis Burdett enjoyed more Opposition approval than usual when, on January 21st, he treated the Admiralty Droits thus:[2]

> He really could not see, though the king might have right to this property, *de jure coronae*, that he could hold any property on any other tenure than for the tenure of the public. He had no right to put money into his own pocket. It was impossible to say how this money might be disposed of. It had been said that it might be given to minions and mistresses; but might it not also be given to such persons as members of parliament? He might first buy all the saleable boroughs, and then procure such a parliament as would willingly sanction the most unjust measures. He must with sorrow confess that it appeared to him that the original splendour of the crown had been diminished, and that several establishments had been laid aside, while more than three millions had been paid to the civil list. . . . Upon the present system, it might happen that a civil list might be burthened with debt, while a king might engross half the landed estates in the kingdom, as his private property.

It seems quite plain from Opposition's attitude to Crown and Regency revenues, in the debates of January 1812, that expectations of special favour from the Regent had been largely abandoned. In February 1812 the Regent did, indeed, make an indirect offer to admit Opposition into a Coalition Government but many contemporaries held that he would have been disappointed

[1] Cf. *Cobbett's Parliamentary Debates*, January 18th, for Creevey claiming the Admiralty Droits as virtually national property. Brougham brought forward a specific motion on January 21st and made some remarkable points. Creevey's motion for an inquiry into the application of the Leeward revenues did not come on until February 11th when the Regency Expenses Bill had been sent to the Lords. This Bill's official name was the King's Household Bill.

[2] *New Annual Register*, 1812, History, p. 77.

if the Opposition leaders had accepted, so pleased was he now with Perceval and Perceval's friends. Grey and Grenville, indeed, were aggrieved both by the manner and matter of the Regent's offer[1] and returned an uncompromising reply, insisting on the necessity of prompt dealing with the Catholic question and, therefore, on the impossibility of their associating with Ministers who were very differently minded.[2] But the Regent's offer was, perhaps, not so patently insincere as cynical contemporaries considered. A large Ministerial reconstruction would have helped him over one of his most pressing difficulties, the necessity of coming to a decision on the bitter feeling that had developed between Wellesley and Perceval, a feeling which had induced Wellesley to offer his resignation unless Perceval ceased to be his superior and which drove Perceval, in his turn, to press for Wellesley's replacement. But once the overture to Opposition was rejected, the Regent seems to have quickly decided that the official coterie round Perceval, Eldon and Liverpool were far safer guides than Wellesley, despite the latter's bitter complaints of the intolerable pedestrianism of Perceval's mind, methods, and ministry.[3] On February 19th, Wellesley's resignation was accepted, and Perceval was more than ever confirmed in power. Undoubtedly he realised that his anti-Catholic reputation gave certain advantages to the double attack

[1] Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 263, for the view that there was left "no doubt in the minds of cool and impartial persons, that he did not wish the opposition to come into power. . . . In the first place, instead of communicating directly either with lord Grey or lord Grenville . . . he wrote a letter to the Duke of York empowering him to communicate the contents of it to lord Grey . . . could he have devised any other means more likely to be efficacious in disgusting or affronting lord Grenville than this bye-mode of mentioning him at the very close of his letter? . . . The conclusion of the letter affords, if possible, still less equivocal and accidental proofs that the prince anticipated with indifference, if not with positive dislike, the introduction of the whig party into power. . . ."

[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 266–7: "The prince regent's letter to the duke of York is dated on the 13th of February; on the 15th lords Grey and Grenville returned their answer. . . . They state generally, that it is impossible for them to unite with the present government . . . they disclaim all idea of grounding it on the principle of personal exclusion; to public measures alone they have looked, and on them . . . their differences are too many and too important to admit of such an union . . . they would not answer for the safety of the empire, if the state of Ireland were not immediately investigated, and if a radical and effectual remedy were not applied. . . ."

[3] Cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 285 et sqq., for Wellesley's statement issued after his resignation: "Lord Wellesley . . . was convinced by experience, that the cabinet neither possessed ability nor knowledge to devise a good plan [for the war]. . . . To Mr. Perceval's judgement or attainments lord Wellesley . . . could not pay any deference, without injury to the public service. . . . He made no exception to any prime minister but Mr. Perceval, whom he considered to be incompetent to fill that office, although sufficiently qualified for inferior stations. . . ."

he had now reason to expect, that from Opposition and that from a Wellesley-Canning party, with a very influential following in the Press. That is why he set to work methodically to buttress himself in power still more strongly. Lord Castlereagh was brought in to take over the Foreign Office, vacated by Wellesley, and the ex-Prime Minister, Lord Sidmouth, agreed to enter the Government as Lord President of the Council.[1]

Despite Perceval's steadily-growing hold on power, his personality and methods still antagonised numbers of "independents", not to mention, of course, the City and Burdettite Radicals, the "regular Opposition", and the Wellesley-Canning group. On two special occasions, the "independents" took the lead in inflicting checks on Perceval, which were the more trying, in that they were calculated to reveal to the Regent the marked limits of the Minister's influence in the House of Commons. In February, when the Army Estimates came on, Bankes consented to lead a movement against the appointment of Colonel M'Mahon, the Regent's friend, to the sinecure office of Paymaster of Widows' Pensions at over £2000 per annum, an appointment already freely criticised by Opposition. After a persistent struggle, he beat Ministers[2] who, thereupon, tried to find compensation for the Colonel and the Regent by appointing M'Mahon, at the same salary, Private Secretary to the Regent. The appointment was attacked as unprecedented in the sense that no King before George III had had such an officer, and he only when he was blind, and once more Ministers were compelled to withdraw.[3]

Meanwhile the "regular Opposition" was agitating Catholic Emancipation and Repeal of the Orders in Council with some effect, the more so as, on Catholic Emancipation, there was strong support from the Wellesley-Canning group and, on the Orders in Council, from almost the entire manufacturing community. There

[1] Though not gazetted until April, such appointments were in prospect since Perceval began arming himself, in January, against the expected broadsides from Wellesley and the Opposition.

[2] Cf. *New Annual Register*, 1812, History, p. 125, for Bankes's success after a preliminary defeat on February 22nd: "When, however, the report was brought up, Mr. Bankes renewed his amendment, and carried it in the teeth of administration by a majority of three."

[3] Cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 201 et sqq., for the excitements of April 14th: "In the house of commons, Mr. W. Wynne rose to move that the copy of the appointment of colonel M'Mahon . . . be laid before the house. . . . A long and spirited debate ensued, and the motion was negatived. The house, however, took the matter up too seriously for ministers to persist in the measure, and they accordingly abandoned it." (Yet their majority had been 176–100.)

were two other questions which Opposition could always agitate with some success, the evils of the paper currency and the desirability of knowing exactly how the Royal Family stood before being called on to make fresh and unpopular grants. When, for example, Perceval came in March with a plan for increasing the income of the princesses to the point where they might, when the time came, maintain "independent establishments", there was one Opposition suggestion that the money, if necessary, should come, not from the Consolidated Fund, but from sinecures that could be abolished or from a reorganised Civil List.[1] Nor was this all. The ex-Minister, Tierney, ventured to compute the total income of the Royal Family from Civil List, Consolidated Fund and other sources at £1,668,000 per annum and to point out that though there was only talk of raising the Consolidated Fund income of each princess to £9000 per annum, that was to leave out their Civil List annuities of £4000 each. And a spectre, particularly disquieting to the Regent, was raised from several Opposition quarters when it was asked why, during a Session so full of grants to the Royal Family, nothing had been heard of the rights and claims of the Regent's wife, the deserted Princess of Wales.[2] Yet another matter, lending itself to particularly angry attacks on Ministers, was a Barrack Bill, suspect to Opposition and the "man in the street" because of its isolation of the soldiery from the "people" and denounced even by "independents" for the enormous scale of costs which the hated Barrack Department was counting on, a scale which envisaged, in one case, the expenditure of £170,000 for the accommodation of four hundred and fifty cavalry.[3]

[1] Cf. *Cobbett's Parliamentary Debates*, March 23rd, for Creevey suggesting the abolition of the two "useless" Tellerships of the Exchequer and the Admiralty Registrarship, held by Perceval's brother, Lord Arden.

[2] *Ibid.*, for Creevey, Tierney, Bennett, Whitbread, Newport. Cf. also *Ibid.*, April 17th, for strong language by Whitbread on the Third Reading of the Princesses' Annuity Bill. Perceval was in a situation, the more awkward, as he had once been the Princess's advocate and had gone into print, on her behalf, with such vigour that all the copies of his defence of her, against charges of adultery, had, at his order, been bought up and destroyed.

[3] Cf. *The Times*, May 4th, after a debate and division on May 1st, which ended the Bill's chances of reaching the Statute Book: "In a house, consisting of 246 members, on Friday, Ministers had but a majority of 22 upon the Barrack Estimates. . . . We shall speak our minds as fully on this occasion as we hear our countrymen do elsewhere: and we believe the unvarnished truth to be, that if the universal verdict of the nation upon Mrs. Clarke's affair had not been most insultingly reversed, this monstrous charge for the Barrack Department, in the present year, would neither have been heard nor thought of. Four hundred pounds for the accommodation of a single dragoon and his

There was another scene on which opposition to the Perceval Government was enacted, during the spring of 1812, and that was the City, where the Radical leaders, Waithman and Wood, were able to stage a Common Hall on March 27th and secure almost unanimous approval for very anti-Ministerial resolutions and a petition of similar temper. The presentation of the petition, denied reception on the throne, made new troubles. Complaint of the "violated rights of the City" brought the "reformers" a small majority in the Common Council, and this body, whose petitions had to be received on the throne, was induced to adopt and to present a bitter anti-Ministerial petition of its own. The reigning tone in City politics shall be judged from this description of the Freemen's meeting of March 27th.[1]

The meeting was opened by a long speech from Mr. Waithman, in the course of which he contrived, with no small degree of ingenuity and success to touch upon all the real and supposed grievances of the nation.... The hopes which the country had entertained of the prince—the eager and fond satisfaction with which they looked forward to his reign, as the termination of that system of corruption, extravagance, grinding taxation, and unnecessary war, under which they had so long groaned.... It was not a difficult matter to select excellent topics for popular and impressive declamation.... Mr. Perceval and lord Castlereagh, who had been charged with the unconstitutional act of bartering for seats in parliament were still in power; the income tax was not only rendered more severe, but was carried into execution in a manner not unworthy of the inquisition ... the nation had the mortification to see the taxes, wrung from the hard hands of honest industry, dissipated in extravagance; bestowed on unworthy favourites, on men who spent it in attempts on the liberty of their country ... or it was squandered away in wars, neither just nor necessary in their commencement....

From this topic Mr. Waithman passed to the depreciation of our paper currency.... At the close of his speech, Mr. Waithman described the kind of ministers who, in his opinion, could alone save or benefit the country.... Mr. Waithman concluded by moving twelve resolutions ... representing their numerous grievances, and praying that he would be pleased to dismiss his evil advisers, and to call into the public service such men only as were pledged to the country to effect those salutary reformations so imperiously called for; to correct those abuses and corruptions which had taken root in every department of

horse! Thirty acres of land for a thousand of them! One hundred and seventy thousand pounds for the building of lodgings for four hundred and fifty men! What an active warfare is some great commander carrying on against the resources of this country!..."

[1] Cf. *New Annual Register*, 1812, History, pp. 269–80.

the state, and to accomplish that radical and effectual reform in the house of commons which should make it truly speak the independent and loyal feelings of the people; and no longer continue the convenient engine of the sinister views and corrupt resources of any minister for the time being.

The resolutions, in general, as well as the petition, were carried almost unanimously. . . .

Fortunately for Ministers, there was hardly any imitation of London's hostile example. In numbers of hard-hit trading towns[1] the dominant elements were more concerned to petition for ending the Orders in Council and opening the India trade. And as Government had moved this way by granting an inquiry, Perceval could safely regard the London agitation rather as a nuisance than a peril. Moreover, the military and diplomatic situation had been changing steadily in Ministers' favour for months, justifying them, with apparent completeness, both against those who, like Wellesley, had criticised their war-effort as too feeble and those, who like the bulk of Opposition, had criticised it as too wasteful and extravagant. A war-effort, capable of the *coups de main* which had captured Ciudad Rodrigo in January and Badajoz in April, hardly seemed as feeble as Wellesley had depicted it, and a Peninsular position, which encouraged Alexander of Russia to abandon the Continental System and prepare to fight Napoleon, could hardly ever have been as hopeless as Opposition had been in the habit of depicting it. And on a much-canvassed domestic matter, meanwhile, the need of taking some action in regard to two "great sinecures", the Tellerships of the Exchequer, whose yields, increasing with the public expenditure, had long passed £23,000 per annum each, Opposition seemed, early in May, to be completely stultifying itself between a Radical wing, calling for abolition, and a leadership, holding apparently as firmly as Perceval, that the "public faith" would be violated if the life-tenure of the Marquis of Buckingham and Earl Camden were, in any way, interfered with.[2]

A sudden new turn was given to politics, at this point, so

[1] Much of the political energy and resource of those towns actually went, first, into the preparation of petitions and the gathering of signatures, and, then, into the dispatch of suitable commercial witnesses to Westminster.

[2] Cf. *Hansard's Parliamentary Debates*, May 7th. Creevey had opened the debate with some telling statistics and facts. The Tellers' huge incomes apparently came from the poundages paid them on Exchequer issues: 7*s*. 6*d*. per £100 on Army ordinaries and 3*s*. 9*d*. per £100 on Army extraordinaries; 8*d*. per £100 on Navy issues and 12*d*. per £100 on Ordnance issues; and, finally, as high a rate as 2½ per cent on pensions and annuities. Creevey calculated that the Tellers' income figure, given, in 1808, as £23,000 had since grown

favourable to Ministers, by the assassination of Perceval on May 11th. Nobody pretended, or desired to pretend, that there was the slightest political significance in the assassination, which was the work of one who had long brooded over imagined private grievances.[1] But Ministers' position in the House of Commons had, of late, seemed to be so exceptionally dependent on Perceval's debating talents that few believed that the existing Ministerial groups, somewhat reshuffled, perhaps, under Lord Liverpool, would make an adequate Government for such perilous times.[2] Liverpool, in fact, thought fit to approach Wellesley and Canning almost at once with an offer of Ministerial place, and these two politicians were confident enough to reject it, though baited with an offer of consideration, not only for themselves but for their friends. Canning was not even afraid to let the public know that, if Ministers' unsatisfactory attitude on the Catholic question was one of the things that motivated his refusal of office from them, another was the proposition that Lord Castlereagh was to be regarded as his senior in the direction of the House of Commons.[3] And if Wellesley did not avowedly demand the Premiership but preferred to justify his rejection of Liverpool's overtures on the ground of Ministers' unsatisfactory attitude towards Catholic Emancipation, the Peninsular War, and the Opposition, that, of course, concealed from nobody Wellesley's own opinion of Liverpool's incapacity for the burdens of Prime Minister.

much greater, yet Ponsonby, Tierney and Horner were all so afraid of encouraging "democratic phrenzy" and confiscation as to sound completely conservative by the side of "independents" like Wilberforce, who favoured an inquiry, and Bankes, who favoured asking the Tellers for an agreement to take lower poundages. Creevey was defeated by 146 votes against 38.

[1] Cf. *New Annual Register*, 1812, Principal Occurrences, pp. 83–93, for the principal facts that emerged about John Bellingham, Perceval's assassin, after the arrest. He had had an indifferent commercial record as a timber-exporter from Russia to Britain, had been thrown into a Russian prison for debt and, alleging his consequent ruin, had vainly demanded from Ministers the obtaining of some redress.

[2] Cf. *Ibid.*, History, p. 318: "By the death of Mr. Perceval, the ministry was supposed to be deprived of such a very large proportion of its strength and talent, and consequently had lost so very much of its hold on the confidence and good opinion of the nation, that no expectation was formed, even by their own partisans . . . that they would be able, without assistance, to carry on the affairs of the nation."

[3] Cf. *Annual Register*, 1812, State Papers, p. 353, for the very opening of Canning's letter of refusal, dated May 18th: "I have communicated to . . . friends . . . the proposition which you conveyed to me. . . . The result of their opinions is, that, by entering into the administration upon the terms proposed to me, I should incur such a loss of personal and public character as would disappoint the object which . . . the Prince Regent has at heart. . . ."

The growing influence of *The Times* had already been enlisted for a Wellesley Administration, and the plan had some warm friends among the "independents" of the House of Commons.[1] When, in fact, Mr. Stuart Wortley, rather than see a weak Liverpool Government established, moved a resolution praying the Prince Regent to "form a strong and efficient" administration, he succeeded in defeating the Ministers by 174 votes against 170.[2] This obviously put an end to Liverpool's immediate prospects of being allowed to reshuffle the Perceval Ministry under himself as Prime Minister. Doubtless Liverpool was among those who advised the Regent that it might now be best to see if Wellesley himself could form a Ministry. Perhaps he guessed that it was more than probable that Wellesley would come to grief. In view of Wellesley's attitude to Perceval and themselves, Liverpool and his colleagues had apparently resolved not to negotiate with him. And it was most doubtful whether Grey and Grenville would treat with Wellesley and Canning on the basis of a Wellesley Premiership and a Canning Leadership of the House of Commons.

It would seem that Wellesley received the Regent's commission to explore the possibilities of constructing a new Government very soon after Ministers' defeat of May 21st, for on May 23rd Wellesley himself interviewed Lords Grey and Grenville and wrote, besides, to their presumed allies Lords Moira, Lansdowne and Holland, leaving to Canning the approach to Liverpool and his friends. It emerged at once that Liverpool and his friends would join no Government under Wellesley, and that Grey and Grenville, while prepared to treat, would do so only on the assumption that it was they, rather than Wellesley and Canning, who would put Parliamentary numbers and prestige at the service of a new Ministry. Thus, though a measure of agreement on Catholic claims and war-policy was obtained during a week's negotiations, agreement broke down decisively when Grey and Grenville found themselves merely invited to recommend four names to a Cabinet of twelve, or five to a Cabinet of thirteen, under Wellesley as First Lord of the Treasury and with Lords Moira and Erskine, apparently abstracted from their alliance and joined with Canning, as the

[1] Cf. *The Times*, May 14th, for the sixth of the much-discussed *Letters of Vetus*. *Vetus* had been calling for a Wellesley Ministry for months.

[2] *Ibid.*, May 22nd. Ministers appear to have recovered a majority just too late. When Mr. Stuart Wortley, after defeating Ministers, went on to move that all the Privy Councillors in the House should take the Resolution, just arrived at, to the Regent, he was defeated by 176 votes to 174.

centre of a Wellesley Cabinet group, free to add to their number as many Cabinet votes as Grey and Grenville had in all.[1] Wellesley resigned his commission on June 3rd, and, on June 5th, the Opposition leaders were approached by Lord Moira, in consequence of a request from the Regent that he should hold joint consultations with them on the formation of a new Government. Grey and Grenville, piqued no doubt that they had not yet been called into direct personal conference with the Regent, refused to treat until Moira procured an explicit commission to form a Government. But, then, matters promised to improve for a brief space and a policy agreement was arrived at on a basis of Catholic Emancipation and a repeal of the Orders in Council. Yet the very conference of June 6th, which saw this provisional basis of agreement reached, saw also the break-up of the negotiation. Grey and Grenville requested assurances that positions in the Regent's Household would, in the usual way, be regarded as being as much open to change as the more political appointments. Though asserting that the Regent had not fettered his commission in any way, Moira declined to give the assurances requested and declared, indeed, that he thought the course proposed for him "peculiarly objectionable".[2] Negotiations were broken off, Moira resigned his commission, and Liverpool was invited to return to office with his old colleagues.

There were, of course, many cynics who believed that the Prince Regent had desired just such a result and had artfully contrived to fix upon Grey and Grenville themselves the apparent "factiousness" that denied the country an all-party Government in the hour of need. On June 11th, indeed, the new Liverpool Cabinet beat off a depreciatory motion by very different figures

[1] *Papers relative to the Negociations of the Marquis Wellesley and the Earl of Moira, for forming a New Administration.* No. 19 of this collection, the letter of June 3rd from Grey and Grenville breaking off negotiations with Wellesley contained this justification: "We enter not into the examination of the relative proportions, or of the particular arrangements. . . . It is to the principle of disunion and jealousy that we object—to the supposed balance of contending interests, in a cabinet so measured out by preliminary stipulation. The times imperiously require an administration united in principle, and strong in mutual reliance. . . ."

[2] Cf. *Ibid.*, No. 29. Grey and Grenville based their demand for changes in the Household on "the necessity of giving to a new government that character of efficiency and stability, and those marks of the constitutional support of the crown, which were required to enable it to act usefully for the public service; and that on these grounds it appeared to them indispensable that the connection of the great offices of the court, with the political administration, should be clearly established in its first arrangements".

from those of May 21st, which had enforced Liverpool's resignation, for a Government vote of 170 against 174 was now converted into one of 289 against 164. Ministers, moreover, made assurance doubly sure by adopting a more conciliatory policy than Perceval's in several directions. Thus, on June 22nd, Canning was allowed to carry, by 235 votes against 106, a motion promising "a most serious consideration" of the Catholic question early in the next Session; on June 23rd the *Gazette* officially registered the Government's abandonment of the attempt to force upon America the Orders in Council; and, in July, the *Reports* of the "Committees of Secrecy" upon the Luddite Riots were followed by less drastic legislation than some had feared. After such irresponsible alarmism, for example, as that shown in the *Report* of the Lords' Committee of Secrecy,[1] it was something that Ministers, not only showed not the slightest desire for Habeas Corpus Suspension,[2] but even offered Opposition, on Third Reading, an important modification of the legislation they had originally demanded.[3] The abandonment of the unpopular Barrack Bill, too, could do Ministers nothing but good.

By the time Parliament was prorogued, therefore, on July 30th, the Liverpool Government might be considered as firmly in the saddle. And events abroad had only helped this consummation by proving that Ministers' judgement had often been a good deal sounder than that of some of their noisier critics. Napoleon, for example, so far from being omniscient and invincible, had obviously exposed himself to formidable dangers by attacking Russia on June 22nd; the concentration of French attention upon Eastern Europe had permitted Wellington, who had already confounded Opposition pessimists, his first major chance in Spain; and, finally, the American war-party, which got its way in June,

[1] Cf. *Annual Register*, 1812, State Papers, pp. 385–93, for this document which alleged great seizures of arms by the Luddites, nightly drilling, and even inter-communication of intelligence "by rockets or blue lights".

[2] Cf. *The Times*, July 1st, which, at first, feared that the Ministers might intend to ask for the suspension of Habeas Corpus in "the disturbed counties" and hotly opposed the notion.

[3] Cf. *Hansard's Parliamentary Debates*, July 20th, for Tierney proposing and Castlereagh accepting the suggestion that the Peace Preservation Bill, already limited in duration to March 25, 1813, might lose its effect even earlier if a proclamation declared the affected districts to be no longer "disturbed". Under the Bill, magistrates of "disturbed" counties received greater power to search for arms, the right to disperse "tumultuary meetings" immediately, and the right to act over the border of their counties whenever it seemed necessary or advisable.

was, thanks to its domestic opponents, hardly the danger which Opposition alarmists had imagined. During the first weeks of the Recess, too, the news seemed to grow steadily more stimulating and hopeful—Anglo-Swedish activities in aid of Russia,[1] a major victory by Wellington at Salamanca,[2] and, most stimulating of all, Wellington's triumphant entry into Madrid.[3] It was speedily conjectured that Ministers would seek to use the good news to strengthen themselves in Parliament by a General Election,[4] and the unusually bountiful harvest promised to help them further. The sitting Parliament was, of course, in its sixth year, and when it was, in fact, dissolved on September 29th Opposition could hardly, in reason, raise the same type of complaint as had been raised against the Dissolution, in the spring of 1807, of the previous Parliament before it was six months old. By the time, moreover, voters began to read candidates' election advertisements in the first week of October, some excellent new war-news was coming in, likely to be helpful to Government.[5] In the Peninsula, the Spaniards had been enabled to eject the French from Seville while Wellington appeared to be driving on fast from Madrid toward Burgos and the French frontier.[6] Across the Atlantic, meanwhile, an attempted American invasion of Canada had come completely to grief, and the force concerned had been compelled to sign an ignominious capitulation.[7] And, as for Eastern Europe, the Russians, though they had not yet been able to arrest Napoleon's

[1] Cf. *The Times*, August 5th and 13th, for the first reports of a plan to land 60,000 Swedes, conveyed in British shipping, to operate on the southern shores of the Baltic against Napoleon's line of communications.

[2] *The Times* first reported an important victory, won on July 22nd, in its number of August 5th. But the "decisive" nature of the victory was not emphasised until August 18th.

[3] Cf. *Ibid.*, September 5th, for the first report of the entry, effected on August 12th.

[4] *The Times* first treated the subject in its issue of September 9th which had the following passage: "A general opinion prevailed yesterday, that a dissolution of Parliament would take place in the ensuing month."

[5] Cf. *Ibid.*, October 6th, for the first election advertisements in this sheet. The same number contained the announcement of the "capture of [the American] General Hull and his army" at Detroit, the signs of French "chagrin" at the "imperfect" character of their last victory and the consequent prospect of retreat, and a caution to the British public that, though Wellington was as far on as Burgos, "the castle of Burgos remains to be reduced".

[6] Cf. *Ibid.*, October 5th: "We are in hourly hopes of being enabled to congratulate the public on a new and splendid achievement of our brave army in Spain. A telegraphic despatch reached the Admiralty at 5 o'clock on Saturday afternoon [October 3] to the following effect: 'Lord Wellington before Burgos—town expected hourly to surrender—two thousand prisoners taken.'"

[7] Cf. *London Gazette*, October 6th, for the official dispatches.

advance deep into their territories, had, to judge even from the last boastful and misleading Napoleonic bulletins, fought with dangerous resolution and effect at Borodino.[1]

It is, perhaps, worth notice, in view of these preliminaries, that what would today be called "the Left" and even "the extreme Left" of politics was, in no way, deterred by Government's obvious advantages but fought, with greater spirit and confidence, and on a wider front, than in 1807. The return of Burdett and Cochrane for Westminster proved impossible for any supporters of Ministers to challenge, and the only pressure upon these candidates was a demand, from a constituency organisation upon Cochrane, to pledge himself more explicitly than he had so far done, to Parliamentary Reform and Catholic Emancipation. Cochrane had apparently meant to hold himself free from any major commitments by clouds of "popular" verbiage on pensions, sinecures and economy but when he was convinced that the Westminster "Friends of the Purity and Freedom of Elections" were quite capable of turning to another candidate, he gave way and pledged himself completely.[2] Another "reformer" who was returned without a contest, and for a more important constituency than Westminster, was George Byng, M.P. for Middlesex.[3] Very like him in political sentiment was Thomas Coke, the famous

[1] Cf. *The Times*, October 3rd: "The 18th Bulletin of the French army, so anxiously expected, is presented to the country in this day's journal. It is the bloodiest narrative that was ever read. The Russians, who have been worsted, have surpassed their former exploits, both in acting and suffering: and the French, who have been victorious, will yet be found, if their superiority in the field produce no undue concessions in the Cabinet, to have small cause for triumph."

[2] Cf. *Ibid.*, October 6th, for the account of the Westminster proceedings of the "Friends of the Purity and Freedom of Elections". This body determined to bring Burdett in "free of expense" but was more cautious in regard to Cochrane until he wrote them a second letter, more to their mind than the first essay he had sent on the merits of his work against sinecures and on behalf of Prize Court Reform. His second letter ran thus: "I hereby pledge myself to vote on all occasions for Reform . . . from a persuasion that the ruin of the country can be averted by that means only. I will likewise support every measure for the abolition of sinecures. . . . As to the Catholic question, Gentlemen, it is proper to inform you that so long as its inquisitorial auricular confession, and its principles so favourable to despotism prevailed on the Continent, I was hostile to it: but that I am now inclined to grant the claims of the Catholics of Ireland, provided that they are content to receive the privileges of Englishmen, and to relinquish their predilection in favour of the jurisdiction of the Pope. . . . I have only to add . . . relative to the objection made to a naval officer being a representative for Westminster . . . that one half of the Taxes levied on the people of England is disbursed on the Navy—for objects which, the ability of all the civil members of Parliament cannot detect to be erroneous, from the inspection of accounts. . . ."

[3] Cf. *Ibid.*, October 13th, for his hustings speech returning thanks.

landowner of Holkham, who, after losing his seat for Norfolk at the 1807 elections, was now, by popular esteem, sent back, unopposed, to Parliament though he insisted on announcing his strong predilection for "radical reform" and an immediate peace negotiation.[1]

The most remarkable election proceedings in the country proved to be the contests at Liverpool and in the City of London. In the latter place, it took a great deal of effort to prevent Waithman and Wood from being sent to join Alderman Combe as "radical reform" representatives for the City, and the effort, in fact, proved irrepeatable when Waithman's and Wood's next chance came.[2] More remarkable even than the City contest was that for Liverpool, where Brougham and Creevey were only beaten by the utmost efforts and by the importation of Canning to make electoral history by undertaking daily oratorical rivalry with Brougham from his election headquarters and by making, in the evenings, the same kind of visits to clubs and assemblies as the Opposition candidates were undertaking.[3] The newspapers speedily became aware that

[1] Coke's speech from the hustings is quoted at the head of the chapter. Burdett's most characteristic pronouncement is there too.

[2] *The Times*, October 13th, for the final figures: Combe, 5125; Curtis, 4577; Shaw, 4082; Atkins, 3045; Waithman, 2622; Wood, 2373. Combe as a very wealthy brewer and an ex-Lord Mayor had so much that the "respectable" honoured that no attempt was even considered against him. At the declaration of the poll, Curtis and Shaw were booed loudly, while their defeated opponents, Waithman and Wood were given a great reception. Wood's carriage was dragged in triumph through the streets, and Waithman received tremendous applause when speaking from the hustings and glorying in the fact that a brother-reformer had been placed at the head of the poll. His explanation of his defeat was that "crowds of voters for the adversary had been dragged to the Hall by the force of the East India Company, the Bank, the Post Office and the Docks".

[3] Cf. *The Times* file for October. *The Times* which, on October 10th, had been giving details of the great Canning procession arranged into the town, for the opening of the contest, was reporting this, on October 17th, after polling had begun: "the contest is continued with unabated zeal and confidence by all parties. Mr. Canning continues to address the people every evening, on the return of his procession upon the close of the poll, to the house of Mr. Gladstone, where Mr. Canning's headquarters are established. . . . Mr. Canning, on these occasions, speaks from one of the drawing-room windows. The speeches are received with enthusiasm by the people, who are wholly unaccustomed to such graceful eloquence, and therefore are more delighted with it. . . ." On the previous day *The Times* had noted that Canning's speaking was very much to the taste of the ladies, and that his Committee had reproduced his oratory on handbills. And here is Canning himself, speaking on October 13th (*The Times*, October 22nd), and bearing witness to his club-visiting: "Gentlemen. . . . In some of the societies which I have visited, a question has been put to me whether I was prepared to support the question of Parliamentary Reform. I have heard that question in societies which I suppose my antagonists had previously visited, and to which they had held forth on the blessings to be derived from a new modelling of Parliament. . . ."

something unusual was happening at Liverpool, and the contest got longer and more excited reporting than any other in the country.[1] When, therefore, Canning finally carried himself and his fellow-candidate to triumph, mainly by wittier and more engaging speaking, all the election experts agreed that he would be the biggest single force in the House of Commons and that the Liverpool Government would be well-advised to ask his assistance even on his own terms. Unless Ministers, indeed, succeeded in breaking up the Wellesley-Canning group, which some considered to have been the only real gainer from the elections, there was, in these judges' opinion, a difficult time ahead for Government.

There were some election judges, however, who considered that Ministers' strength had risen though, perhaps, hardly enough to justify their Dissolution.[2] The representation from Ireland had apparently been given special attention by Government, and this chapter shall be closed by a couple of quotations from Irish election oratory. Ministers succeeded in ejecting, from the representation of Cork City the powerfully-connected Christopher Hely Hutchinson, though that Irish Whig had used almost "seditious" oratory in the attempt to preserve a seat he had held since 1801.[3] Here is one passage from Hely Hutchinson's hustings speaking:[4]

Why are these clergymen arrayed against me, and against you, the people of the land, under the Right Reverend, the Bishop of Cork, and under, I will say, the Government of Ireland? It is the interference of a Divine Providence which interposes and protects us against them. A firebrand has been cast into your city! Orders, I am convinced, have been issued from the Castle . . . to array the Protestant against the Catholic, and cast the firebrand between them . . . for the last few days, the most violent and unfair exertions have been resorted to against me . . . people have been sent in coachfuls to vote against me . . . the

[1] It is curious to find *The Times* of October 22nd giving Canning's speech of October 13th and its number of October 23rd giving his speech of October 14th. Apparently the full text of those speeches had just arrived. The speech of October 14th has another interest to historians—Canning reproves his opponents for using the "big and small loaf" as part of their processional apparatus—the "big loaf" of Peace and the "small loaf" of War.

[2] *The Times*, unfriendly, which was still pressing the idea of a Wellesley-Canning Ministry, estimated, in its number of November 27th, that Ministers had only gained four seats in England and Ireland.

[3] Hely Hutchinson was younger brother both of Lord Donoughmore and of Lord Hutchinson, captor of Cairo and Alexandria in 1801. He had himself fought in Holland in 1799 and Egypt in 1801.

[4] *The Times*, November 14th. Hutchinson, like Creevey and Brougham, was brought in for another seat, in his case, County Longford.

reason of all this is clear.... Some time back, the Protestants of Ireland wisely and justly signed a petition to Parliament in favour of their oppressed and much-injured fellow-countrymen, the Irish Roman Catholics. Gentlemen, this petition had its effect... the members of the House of Commons voted... to take your cause into consideration. Gentlemen, how was a corrupt and vicious Ministry to meet this? Why, only one mode was left... they dissolve the Parliament, they call a new election, and instantly as those elections are about to commence, and during their continuance, they issue their legions of emissaries; and the Lord Lieutenant of the country drives forth coaches full of his wicked emissaries to Tipperary, to Limerick, and to Cork, to divide the people, to create confusion, to disturb the nation—to excite religious animosity, and to destroy the land. I do charge the Duke of Richmond with disturbing the public peace: he who, as the Chief Magistrate of the nation, should be its most watchful guardian, I do charge him with exciting in this City a spirit, a diabolical spirit....

The Cork County election was another which necessarily attracted the attention of Government since Opposition's leader in the Commons, George Ponsonby, attempted to recover his seat there instead of attending Parliament as representative of an English pocket borough. Ponsonby was beaten, but made this criticism of the methods that had been employed:[1]

Gentlemen, my honourable opponent... after having exhausted his anti-Catholic tallies, and ensured... the votes of those who are inimical to the claims of his Catholic fellow-countrymen,... he, then, and not till then, turns to my aggrieved fellow-countrymen (Loud applause and cries of *too late too late*). He tells you, my Catholic fellow-countrymen, that he will support your claims, if they are not inconsistent with the security of the Church and State. I tell you, Gentlemen, that I consider the complete unqualified concession of those your honest claims, not only not opposed to, but connected with the prosperity, and actually identified with the existence of the Church and the State. (Loud and continued cheering.) Gentlemen, I am not one of those who can believe, that the exclusion and degradation of SIX MILLIONS OF SUBJECTS, can add to the strength of an Empire, of whose population they form a third (Loud applause).... My honourable opponent says that he thinks the Catholic claims ought to be *considered*... but he will not pledge himself to the only thing about which you can feel anxiety.... I feel no such hesitation, Gentlemen,

[1] *The Times*, November 7th. Catholic freeholders had had votes since 1793, and that was why, as Mr. Ponsonby had hinted, his opponent, Mr. Hare, found it useful to give them, as well as their opponents, some half-promises. The loud cheering, awarded to Mr. Ponsonby, doubtless came largely from the throats of the great Catholic majority who had no votes to give him.

and when I declare myself, as I have done, and now do, the unalterable friend of unrestricted Catholic Emancipation, I do not feel that I sacrifice any portion of my independence.

Gentlemen, there are other great subjects on which I should wish to hear the opinion of my honourable opponent.... What does he think of a Parliamentary Reform? ... I wish my honourable opponent would also state his opinion on the subject of sinecure places and offices in reversion ... on all these subjects I have given my opinion and have proved the sincerity of my professions by my acts. I have voted in favour of every measure which promised relief, or peace, or security to my country....

CHAPTER XVII

THE PARLIAMENT OF 1812 TO WATERLOO

"There is, certainly, a great deficiency of oratory in the House of Commons . . . Plunkett, on the Catholic question, exhibited a peculiar eloquence which astonished me; without manner, without elegant language, or even choice of words, without ornament of any kind, he poured forth, for nearly four hours . . . a torrent of argument which seemed absolutely irresistible. Grattan is elegant and persuasive; Whitbread always shrewd and powerful; though sometimes coarse. . . . These instruct the House, but it is most delighted with Canning; and that very circumstance gives him boldness, and enables him to delight it the more. Brilliant wit, the most cutting personal satire, often mixed with buffoonery, but always delivered in elegant language, and with action particularly suited to it, these are his excellencies. His speeches, however, are got up with much labor and study. . . . Manners Sutton and Robinson have some talents for speaking, and will probably improve. Ponsonby speaks like a gentleman, generally tame; he sometimes rises above himself. After these, there is nothing at present worth notice."

Sir R. Heron, M.P. in March 1813.

"The battle of Waterloo has decided the fate of Europe . . . the combined Sovereigns, in the hour of prosperity, forget every promise, every engagement, and every principle, they had put forth, when they thought public opinion necessary to their success. But on the English Government falls the greatest load of guilt. It is they who principally insist on imposing upon the French, the wretched and despotic government of the Bourbons. It is the blood and treasure of this free country, which cements their tyranny and bigotry, and enables them to enforce their perjured authority upon their miserable subjects. Under our presiding influence, the Monarchs are leagued against every exertion of popular energy, and every attempt to mitigate the abuses of arbitrary power.

"The restoration of the Jesuits, of the Inquisition, the persecution of the Protestants, are amongst the benefits we have been instrumental in conferring upon the world; and nations have been parcelled out, like land upon an inclosure, and in many instances, as in the case of Warsaw and Genoa, delivered up to their bitterest enemies."

The Oppositionist *Notes by Sir Robert Heron* (under 1815).

THE newly-elected Parliament, that came together, on November 24, 1812, for a short set of pre-Christmas sittings, faced both good news and bad. It was already plain that Napoleon had run into the greatest difficulties and dangers in Russia, and, when Ministers moved a grant of £200,000 in aid of the Russian sufferers from the French invasion, there was virtually unanimous approval, Government's grant, indeed, being supplemented, all over the country, by voluntary local collections and Funds.[1] But to set over against the jubilation at Russia's achievements, the full measure of which became more apparent in December and January, there was some bitterness about Britain's own war performance. Supporters of Wellesley and Canning were especially dangerous when criticising Ministers for some naval "humiliations" inflicted on Britain by the Americans, and for the long and costly retreat from Burgos forced, it was claimed, upon Wellington owing to the inadequate support furnished him by Government.[2]

When Parliament came together again on February 12, 1813, Ministers still had a good many anxious moments to endure. In arranging the new India Bill, to determine Indian conditions for the next twenty years, they undoubtedly showed prudence in steering a careful course between "Company monopoly" and "free trade" in commercial matters and, in religion, between the dangerous Christianising policy of Wilberforce and the religious indifferentism favoured by most Anglo-Indians. But on the two most contentious topics of domestic policy, Ministers emerged far less happily. The Regent's scandalous treatment of his deserted wife produced a new crisis, and a flood of documentation, after the Princess appealed to Parliament early in March. The "public", followed by the newspapers, very soon rallied decisively to the Princess, who, to add to her troubles, had lately been notified that she would only be allowed to see her daughter, the Princess

[1] Cf. *Westmorland Advertiser and Kendal Chronicle*, January 9, 16, and 23, 1813, for the comparatively large subscription raised in so small and remote a place as Kendal.

[2] Cf. *The Times*, January 1st: "alas! our public councils are guided by men, who systematically dilute every hostile measure; who have thrown away all the benefits of the Spanish campaign, and given America a cheering cordial in her naval successes. . . . The Ministers, as well as the country, loudly, and no doubt heartily, applauded the sturdy and persevering boldness of the Russians: but to imitate that daring people in the most humble degree, does not appear to have entered into their imagination. . . ."

Charlotte, once a fortnight instead of once a week.[1] Ministers, suspected of a desire to court the Regent by making use of the tit-bits of scandal that had been gathered against the Princess since she had been deserted in 1796, had some bad moments and emerged with little grace from the debates. On another matter, that of Catholic Emancipation, they were, perhaps, more fortunate though, according to Opposition, their conduct was even less straightforward. On February 25th, the House of Commons was asked to honour the promise, given to the Catholics in the Session of 1812, of taking their claims under consideration. After an immense debate, a majority of 264 against 224 decided, on March 2nd, to give the Catholics the promised consideration of their claims. There followed some important discussions behind the scenes, and, finally, Grattan, Canning, and Castlereagh, as representing widely-sundered sections of the House, favourable to Emancipation, produced a Catholic Bill, albeit one furnished with "safeguards" unwelcome to the Catholics and privately criticized among Opposition.[2] Yet while Ministers' Leader of the House was associated with Grattan and Canning in drafting the Bill, the Regent felt himself free to organise a fatal opposition. The *coup de grâce* was given to the Bill, on May 24th, when the Speaker, addressing the House from the floor, carried an amendment, by 251 votes against 247, which removed from the Bill, as too perilous, the conceded Catholic claim to sit in Parliament.[3] Ponsonby, Leader of the

[1] *The Times* on October 8, 1812, had shewn resentment of the newly-announced restriction on the Princess of Wales's interviews with her daughter, addressing the Royal Family thus: "For God's sake, for the sake of yourselves and your country, bear in mind the primary cause of all the miseries of Spain; think to what the unhappy dissentions of the Royal Family there have led. . . ." In the discussions of March, it began by adopting an unfriendlier tone to the Princess but, quickly scenting the way the "public" was sympathising with her, altered its course and ultimately referred to her as a "great and good woman". If she was not that, she was certainly a deeply-injured woman, still exposed to the result of servant-maid gossip of pregnancy and secret delivery, long dismissed by the Privy Council after the "delicate investigation" of 1806.

[2] Cf. *Notes by Sir Robert Heron, Bart.* Under May 26, 1813, when his notes were entered, Heron, who was M.P. for Grimsby, wrote thus: "The delay of a fortnight had been consumed by Lord Castlereagh, Grattan, and Canning in forming a bill, in which each sacrificed something to the opinion of the others. I confess I do not like the fruits of their labours, because the restrictions with which they have loaded the measure, appear to me to be unjust, nugatory, and irritating; nor can I understand the fairness of interfering with the patronage of their clerical establishment, when we do not contribute to its support [the Ministerial 'veto' on Catholic bishops]; yet even this qualified measure is far better than none."

[3] *Ibid.*: "The Prince has made every possible exertion to defeat the Bill, and the most profligate intrigues have been carried on. Many Members, who before supported, have now voted on the other side."

Opposition, thereupon abandoned the Bill as now worthless for any purpose of conciliating the Catholics. One of his friends went farther and announced that a full case for Parliamentary Reform had been made out by the proofs of "corruption" that had been furnished by that one night's proceedings.[1]

Foreign affairs, too, despite the increasing straits of Napoleon, brought Ministers some grave anxieties. If Russian troops overthrew and occupied the Grand Duchy of Warsaw; if, first, the Prussian Army and, then, the Prussian Court allied with Russia and prepared to overwhelm the Napoleonic system in Germany, there were annoying setbacks, too, the blame for which could be, and often was, ascribed to Government. Thus, at one stage during the spring of 1813, Hamburg had liberated itself from French control and Hanover was preparing to follow, when the French, in default of any speedy action from England, succeeded in re-establishing their hold. Opposition persistently blamed Ministers for this misfortune and ascribed particular culpability to their unjustifiable and long-criticized Swedish Treaty. To get the support of Bernadotte, Crown Prince of Sweden, support that had so far proved completely valueless, Ministers had agreed to deprive the Danish Crown of great Norwegian territories and hand them over to Sweden. Apart from the immorality of handing over Norway from a popular to a detested rule, the Treaty had apparently done the very reverse of what was intended. While Bernadotte was suspected of waiting to see what would happen in the immense clash, between Napoleon and his opponents, preparing on the Elbe,[2] Denmark, despite the harm inflicted by Britain, had volunteered to abandon Napoleon and had even guarded Hamburg, for a space, from a French reoccupation. Only when Denmark's overtures had been set aside on account of the Swedish Treaty, had the Danes seen themselves forced back, willy-nilly, to the French alliance and the French reoccupation of the Hanse Towns.[3]

[1] *Ibid.*, for Lord Rancliffe, M.P. for Nottingham Town.

[2] Cf. *Kendal Chronicle*, May 15th, for what Bernadotte, as an ex-Marshal of Napoleon's, was deemed capable of: "A correspondence, it is said, has been intercepted in which the Crown Prince of Sweden transmitted to Bonaparte all the particulars of the plan formed by the Allies for the next campaign." The *Kendal Chronicle* did not believe this possible "although we do not place much reliance on the honour of one of the French revolutionary upstarts".

[3] *Ibid.*, June 26th, for the report of the Commons' proceedings of June 18th when Ponsonby's attack on the Swedish Treaty won 115 votes against 224. In the Lords, Grey and Holland led the attack and won 77 votes against 140.

When the great clashes on the Upper Elbe began, in May, Ministers had new anxieties. For a time they seemed completely unable to prevent the combats from going in favour of Napoleon nor Austria from successfully negotiating an armistice, in June, in apparent preparation for a peace conference in which all Britain's propositions might be voted down by a *bloc* of the four great military powers of the Continent, cheered on by America. Here is *The Times*, still dangerously hostile to the Ministers, on a situation for which they were allegedly far too small:[1]

> We yesterday stated, that we feared Buonaparte would be but too successful in his attempts to procure an armistice. Sorry are we to say, that our opinion has proved correct.... Oh, that the nation would awake to the dangerous consequences of trusting power to men whose incapacity has become so lamentably apparent! The time is critical. A continental peace is probably on the eve of being established——
>
> And we are left, or shall be left, alone
> The last that dare to combat with the foe.
>
> Can we under such circumstances commit the safety of the country any longer to the authors of the Swedish treaty, to the abandoners of Hamburgh and Hanover, to the creators of the American Navy, to the managers of the last Spanish campaign? What have these men done during the course of the last fourteen months, or rather what have they not done, to justify the decisive sentence passed on their incapacity by the House of Commons, at the very outset of their career! Because the country would not support its Representatives on that memorable occasion, because it was contented to sit still under the miserable domination of these Lords of Misrule, we now see all our prospects blasted and the Continent sinking fast into that wretched servitude from which we had fondly hoped to see it liberated by British co-operation.

Much of the force of such criticism of the Ministers had, of course, gone by July 22nd when they prorogued Parliament amid the *éclat* of Vittoria in Spain and a stimulating maritime success against the Americans, the *Shannon*'s defeat and capture of the *Chesapeake*. As the *Kendal Chronicle* put it, at the end of July:[2]

> Fortune smiles upon our arms in every quarter of the world, and the month of June last has teemed with little more than British triumphs. It opened with the capture of the *Chesapeake* and the restoration of our naval fame. It closed with the ever-memorable battle of Vittoria, and the intermediate space was occupied with less extensive, but not less important achievements in Canada....

[1] *The Times*, June 16th.

[2] *Kendal Chronicle*, July 31st.

The course of foreign affairs, too, went very favourably for Ministers, during the Recess, with the break-down of the Prague conferences, the entry of Austria on the allied side, and the plunging of Napoleon into a new set of combats, ending, when Wellington was already standing on French soil, with the decisive French defeat of Leipzig. But Napoleon's enforced retreat behind the Rhine was followed by a mingled winter of negotiations and fighting, which had its own keen anxieties for Ministers, fearful, occasionally, of the break-up of the victorious Coalition under the stress of rival ambitions, hard and dangerous battles, and special Napoleonic offers to Austria. Fortunately for Government, Napoleon outplayed his diplomatic hand throughout the winter of 1813–14 and was reduced to abdication early in April. There followed months of pageantry and excitement, coming to a first climax, in June, during the visit to England of the sovereigns of Russia and Prussia, and to a second, on August 1st, when the centenary of the accession of the House of Hanover was celebrated in magnificent style.[1]

Meanwhile the Parliamentary Session, completed in July 1814, had seen Opposition still capable of some searching criticism. Opposition, among other things, found occasion to grumble at the consequences that continued to flow from the unfortunate Swedish Treaty in that, even when the Crown of Denmark had been coerced into ceding Norway to Sweden, the British Navy continued to be employed in the unrighteous work of breaking popular Norwegian resistance by blockade.[2] Again, when the youthful Peel, as Irish Chief Secretary, asked for special powers to repress dangerous Irish disorders, Opposition forgot not to remind Ministers of what it had prophesied when Catholic Emancipation was refused nor to demand, before any part of the nation's liberties was surrendered, the clearest proof of the necessity for such surrender.[3] There was some further scandal in the Royal Family, where the unfortunate Princess of Wales was submitted to the ignominy of total exclusion from the society of

[1] Cf. *Ibid.*, August 6th, for enthusiastic notices on what had been done to celebrate the *Grand National Jubilee* in Hyde Park, the Green Park, and St. James's Park.

[2] *Ibid.*, May 21st, for the speeches of Lords Grey, Grenville and Holland, on May 10th, in the Lords.

[3] Cf. *Annual Register*, 1814, History, pp. 162–3, for censure on Peel, on July 14th, for not mentioning Orangemen's violence in Ulster as among the outrages needing attention.

the royal visitors from Russia and Prussia and was offered, by Ministers, the clumsy compensation of an increased income.[1] Meanwhile it was understood that the escape to her mother, attempted by the Princess Charlotte, and her refusal of the hand of the Hereditary Prince of Orange, were concerned with her eager sympathy for her mother's cause. The young Princess would doubtless have liked nothing better than to accompany her mother on the long continental tour which the latter was planning in order to wipe away the memory of her English humiliations.

But both in the Parliamentary business of March–July 1814 and in that of the Session, begun in the following November, the attention of the "public" became more and more concentrated on the proposed Corn Laws. A Commons Select Committee, sitting in 1813, had adopted some resolutions, so favourable to land-owners, that all urban and manufacturing interests had taken fright. A permanent semi-famine price for wheat and other grain was apparently to be allowed by regulations aimed, it seemed, at keeping the normal price of wheat, for instance, above 90*s.* 0*d.* per quarter and, perhaps, even above 103*s.* 0*d.* per quarter.[2] Before action on the 1813 Select Committee's Report could be undertaken in 1814, the greatest petitioning activity had been set on foot throughout the country. Here are some reports of the Northumberland and Scottish petitioning of the spring of 1814 which will, perhaps, be taken as more representative of the country, as a whole, than similar reports available from London and Westminster, dominated as these were by "radical reformers":[3]

> The petitions from Newcastle to Parliament, praying that the proposed alteration in the corn laws may not be carried into effect, were signed in the course of three days by the very great number of 11,500 persons. Each petition consisted of 45 skins of parchment. They were presented on Tuesday se'nnight.
>
> We have great pleasure in stating that his Grace the Duke of Northumberland has, with characteristic liberality of sentiment, expressed

[1] Though offered £50,000 a year by Ministers, the Princess of Wales, on the advice of Opposition, accepted only £35,000.

[2] Cf. *Annual Register*, 1814, History, p. 127. Free and unhindered exportation of wheat was to be allowed so long as home prices ruled below 90*s.* 0*d.* per quarter, and importation of foreign wheat was not permitted till the home price reached 103*s.* 0*d.* per quarter. The argument, such as it was, for these semi-famine figures was, mainly, that some of the worst land, brought under cultivation during the war to prevent starvation or surrender, could not be cultivated at a profit, save on a basis of high prices.

[3] *Kendal Chronicle*, May 14th, quoting the *Tyne Mercury* and other journals.

himself decidedly hostile to any legislative enactment for enhancing the price of Grain, thinking it best under all circumstances that the price of Corn, as well as every other article, should be left to find their own level.

The public interest excited in this town by the late petition against any alteration in the corn laws, had no sooner subsided here, than the scene changed to North Shields. On Thursday a general meeting was held, which was most numerously attended; and after agreeing unanimously upon some very appropriate resolutions, petitions were drawn up, and the number of persons that flocked on Friday and Saturday, to record their names, was beyond all precedent in the town.

A petition by the inhabitants of Johnstone, against the proposed alteration of the corn law, has been transmitted. . . .

The council of convenery, Cupar Fife, unanimously resolved, on Saturday the 23 April to petition Parliament. . . .

The town of Berwick-on-Tweed, has petitioned Parliament. . .

We are informed that the secretary to the committees of the incorporations of Edinburgh, &c. on the corn laws, has received communications from the incorporated trades of a great many of the principal towns of Scotland, stating that petitions . . . had been forwarded to Parliament, and their determination to oppose the same by all legal means.

After such demonstrations as these, the Select Committee of 1813, though it could claim both "independence" of Government and strong representation from among Opposition,[1] had necessarily to modify its ideas. Ultimately, the nation was offered duty-free importation from abroad when the home price of wheat was 86*s.* 0*d.* or more per quarter. When the home price was below 86*s.* 0*d.* per quarter, there would be, as the price fell, an increasing scale of duty reaching as high as 24*s.* 0*d.* per quarter duty when the home price of wheat declined to 63*s.* 0*d.* or less. And even these modified figures were to be made more palatable by the provision that corn from British North America would be admitted at half-duty and that facilities would be provided at the ports for foreign corn to be stored duty-free until such time as it was needed for home consumption. The urban agitation, however, remained such that Ministers themselves urged delay and further consideration. But as they rather faltered before the task of asking the House to cancel the resolutions of a Select Committee, the matter

[1] The chairman of the 1813 Committee had been a fairly prominent Irish Whig, Sir Henry Parnell, M.P. for Queen's County. Irish Whigs, especially if they were landowners, had some hopes of reviving Irish prosperity by corn-growing, at profitable prices, for the British market.

was taken out of their hands by Canning's colleague in the representation of much-agitated Liverpool, General Gascoyne. Gascoyne's amendment, for deferring the consideration of the Corn Law Report for six months, instead of the three weeks proposed by Ministers, was carried, on June 6th, by 116 votes against 106.[1]

The events of the Recess made the Corn Law issue no easier to deal with after the new Parliamentary Session had opened in November 1814. The eagerly-awaited peace had, so far, seemed to bring little but economic disorganisation and ruinous disturbance of the relatively stable patterns which Britain's war-time production had assumed after twenty years of almost continuous hostilities. On the one hand, farmers, committed to high war rents for a long time to come under seven-, fourteen-, and twenty-one-year leases, had already suffered greatly from the heavy fall in agricultural prices which had set in at the mere mention of peace.[2] On the other hand, the manufacturing populations had been hard-hit by the cessation of war-orders and by the non-appearance of any compensating peace-time demand from the war-stricken Continent, still awaiting an obviously difficult "settlement" at the Congress of Vienna. It may be assumed, indeed, that the Peace signed with America at Ghent on December 24, 1814, on terms that disappointed some British aspirations, was influenced both by the deteriorating news coming from Vienna and by the hope of reopening American markets to British manufacturers.[3] Meanwhile Parliament, after meeting between November 8th and December 1st, had been adjourned, despite Opposition's protests, until February 9, 1815.[4] By that date Ministers apparently

[1] Cf. *Kendal Chronicle*, June 11th. This paper's editorial comment ran: "The Corn Bill, as we predicted it would be, has been lost in the House of Commons; lost, we hope, never more to be found. John Bull, stupid as they represent him, had sense enough to find out that a quartern-loaf at nine pence is better than a quartern loaf at fifteen pence."

[2] Cf. *Ibid.*, May 14th, for what was happening even after the first heavy fall in grain prices: "Horses, 15 per cent lower, no more being wanted for the cavalry; and cattle more than 20 per cent from the discontinuance of the contracts.... Good veal is now selling at Harwich for 6*d.* per lb. and eggs 40 for 1*s.* which articles are imported from Holland regularly twice a week."

[3] Cf. *Ibid.*, December 31, 1814, for some disappointment at the failure of the Treaty of Ghent to improve the Canadian frontier. Maine which had been conquered by the British was to be restored to the Americans, who were also, despite earlier British hopes, to keep the southern shores of Lakes Ontario, Erie, Huron and Superior.

[4] *Ibid.*, December 10th, for Grenville's strenuous opposition in the Lords, on December 1st, and for Ponsonby's dividing against Ministers on the same day in the Commons. One of Grenville's objections to so long an adjournment

expected decisive results, one way or another, from Vienna and might hope, among other things, to be able to recommend a Government policy on the Corn Laws.[1]

The reassembly of Parliament on February 9th found Ministers reassured, indeed, on the aspect of affairs at Vienna but facing the certainty of a great deal of varied opposition at home. On the Corn Laws, Government finally determined to draft legislation of its own, which was introduced into the Commons, on February 17th, by Frederick Robinson, a junior Minister. Under Government's plan, foreign wheat would enter duty free when the home price was over 80*s.* 0*d.* per quarter but, on the other hand, it would be totally excluded until that price was reached. A strong movement against the Ministerial plan began almost as soon as it was launched, and once again, as in 1814, urban petitioning was prepared on a large scale. As early as March 1st and 3rd, for example, when the First and Second Readings of the Corn Bill were carried by large majorities, which included some elements from Opposition, a significant number of petitions were already being presented to the House.[2] But it was on Monday, March 6th, the day fixed for the beginning of the Committee stage in the Commons, that a real attempt seems to have been organised by the populace of the capital to overawe Parliament into an abandonment of the Bill. The preliminary means employed for gathering the mob were thus described in a provincial newspaper, unfriendly to the Corn Bill :[3]

> We lament to state that that worst and least efficacious of all possible means has been resorted to, that of attempting to intimidate Parliament by menace and violence—Every man who has walked the streets of

was the fact that war with America was still raging, while, in the Commons, December 1st found Opposition pressing Government closely on the naval disappointments of the American War.

[1] The *Kendal Chronicle* file for December 1814 and January 1815 shews that even provincial England was very well informed on the long crisis at Vienna on the Saxon and Polish questions.

[2] *Kendal Chronicle*, March 11th, gives the following petitions as having been presented on March 1st: One from St. Saviour's, Southwark; one from Frome, signed by 4500 persons; petitions from the Provost and Corporation, and from the Chamber of Commerce of Glasgow; one from 4000 inhabitants of Greenwich, etc. The petitions presented on March 3rd came from Billingsgate, Bishopsgate, Clerkenwell, Spitalfields, Whitechapel, St. Clement Danes, Woolwich, Tiverton, Coventry, Reading, County of Ayr, and the Trades House of Glasgow. But the petitioning campaign was then only half under way, for the very same number of the *Kendal Chronicle* shows that the Kendal meeting for example, for adopting a form of petition was not held till March 6th.

[3] *Ibid.*, March 11th.

London for the last fortnight, has seen the inscriptions on the walls, attempting to inflame the public mind, and excite riot and disturbance. These have been accompanied by violent speeches, and ballad-singing in the streets, the consequences of which have been as follow:— OBSTRUCTIONS OF MEMBERS—TUMULT ROUND THE HOUSE OF COMMONS. . . .

A situation of considerable peril developed, indeed, and troops had to be used to protect Parliament from mob-violence. Even so, the night of March 6th was one of dangerous disorder in the capital, with destructive mobs seeking to smash up the West End mansions of those who were believed to have influenced the adoption of the Corn Law policy.[1]

The mob troubles of March 6th were hardly calculated to win new recruits for those sections of Opposition which were resisting an 80*s.* 0*d.* Corn Law. On March 6th itself, a motion to substitute 74*s.* 0*d.* for 80*s.* 0*d.* was voted down by 208 votes against 77; the figure of 72*s.* 0*d.*, divided upon, on March 8th, obtained only 50 votes against 168; and, finally, on March 10th, the Third Reading was carried by as large a majority as 245 against 72, despite the violent Westminster Petition, signed by 42,473 inhabitants, which Burdett had just presented, and the numerous similar petitions still streaming in.[2] It was at this stage, moreover, that the first reports of Napoleon's landing in France arrived, and, as it became increasingly clear during the succeeding fortnight, that he would recover complete control of France, the Corn Law and a number of other questions that had been embarrassing Government sank a good deal in relative importance. When the immediate prospect, that is, was a renewal of fighting and the return of war-prices for wheat, well above 80*s.* 0*d.*, protests against the Corn Law lost their *raison d'être*, for the time, almost as completely as did the strong campaign that had been started for the immediate abolition of the Income Tax or the objections that had been pressed, from among Opposition, whether to Vienna Congress decisions[3] or to the

[1] *Kendal Chronicle*, March 11th, for the damage done at Lord Eldon's, Mr. Robinson's, Mr. Yorke's, Lord Darnley's and Lord Ellenborough's. There was similar trouble, at Glasgow, on March 7th. One of the persons, arrested in London, for twice haranguing mobs on March 7th, was later charged with having invited the "mechanics to rise for wages and redress their own wrongs; called upon them to remember Hampden, Sidney, and Russell, and Oliver Cromwell, who so gloriously dissolved the Parliament".

[2] *Ibid.*, March 18th.

[3] *Ibid.*, February 25th, for the objections (e.g. in the Lords on February 15th) to the transfer of Genoa and its territories to the King of Sardinia. Genoa

alleged slowness of British demobilisation.[1] During the Corn Law's final stages in the Lords, public attention was, in fact, transferred almost completely to the French scene and to the decisions that would have to be taken in consequence both in Britain and on the Continent.[2]

Napoleon's complete success in re-establishing himself in France tended, like the Corn Law, to produce divided counsels in Opposition. An extreme section, headed by Whitbread, held that the speedy and complete collapse of the Bourbons showed how stupid and useless would be a war for their replacement. Negotiations with a much-chastened Napoleon were altogether preferable both as avoiding an immediate renewal of hostilities and as promising a French régime, not needing to be supported indefinitely from the outside. A middle section, headed by Grey and Ponsonby, would not go as far as this but held that the crushing expense of another long war would produce evils so serious that reasonable overtures from Napoleon ought not to be refused a hearing outright. A third section, whose leading figure was Grenville, blamed Ministers, indeed, for not, on the one hand, keeping a better watch on Elba and for not seeing, on the other, that Napoleon was paid the

had been "liberated" from Napoleon by a British expedition which had been freely aided by Genoese in the confident expectation that their ancient republic would be restored. Arrangements were apparently under way for the re-proclamation of the Genoese Republic on January 1, 1815, when the most unpopular Congress decision from Vienna was communicated late in December. Another matter of foreign politics, which was causing Opposition protest almost simultaneously, was the surrender, by the British commander in Gibraltar, of two Spanish refugees from the repulsive reaction which Ferdinand VII had inaugurated in Spain. Whitbread raised this matter repeatedly in the Commons (e.g. February 17th), and he it was, too, who challengingly demanded from Castlereagh, immediately on his return, a full and early account of Vienna decisions, still concealed from the public. (Commons, March 6th, and, later, in a much more elaborate form, March 20th.)

[1] Grenville had raised this matter very strongly when objecting to the adjournment of December 1, 1814. Seventy-five thousand British troops were, according to him, still on the Continent, adding to British burdens and debt, and "likely to be employed, not for the professed object of their service, the deliverance and freedom of the Continental States, but their subjugation and enslavement". According to him, some of the Allies, in respect of thirst for aggrandisement, "appeared not to be behind the great tyrant upon whose downfall their glory appeared to rise". (*Kendal Chronicle*, December 12, 1814, reporting the Lords' debate of December 1st.)

[2] The final division in the Lords on March 20th was one of 128 against 11. But the same number of the *Kendal Chronicle*, reporting these figures (March 25th), was already reporting Wellington's appointment as Generalissimo in the Netherlands and the hurried search for transports to convey British troops thither. The London postscript and the editorial were both occupied with the situation in France and on the Continent and made no mention of the Corn Law.

financial allowances promised him at the Treaty of Fontainebleau and the withholding of which had given him an awkward juridical case for cancelling his abdication.[1] But in the actual state of things, this section saw no alternative to Ministers' policy of standing in line with their continental allies and refusing to recognise all Napoleon's attempted justifications for his breach of the Abdication Treaty of Fontainebleau.

As things turned out, Whitbread's war on the Bourbons, and the less overt hostilities for which Grey and Ponsonby were prepared, did Opposition an immense amount of harm with the "public", who resented the tendency to find excuses or even semi-justifications for Napoleon.[2] Opposition's final objections to being irrevocably committed to what might prove another Ten Years' War with Napoleon were urged, in the Lords, on May 22nd and, in the Commons, on May 25th. All things considered, the anti-war fraction of Opposition divided respectably at 44–156 in the Upper House and 92–331 in the Commons, figures which seem almost favourable when it is remembered that Grenville had argued strongly for war in the one House and Grattan and Plunket in the other.[3] But when the Parliamentary debates of May

[1] The Marquess Wellesley, still at odds with Ministers even if Canning had come to terms, went further than Grenville in his criticism of Ministers' sins of omission and commission. Thus, in the Lords, on April 7th, he even denounced the way France had been treated at Vienna. And as to the French Government's withholding of Napoleon's allowances, he remarked (*Kendal Chronicle*, April 15th): "He was told that the non-payment of Napoleon's pension was no breach of the contract, as it was to be paid by the year; but was it intended to be paid? What was done as to the provision for his son? Was it prudent or wise to give the semblance of justice to his cause?"

[2] Cf. *Kendal Chronicle*, April 1, 1815. This moderate and sensible provincial paper, though it had just been fighting hard against Ministers' Corn Law, quickly took Ministers' side on Napoleon, by quoting extensively from the London *Courier*'s attack on Opposition's courses. Here is one example: "But the opposition have already found out motives that palliate, if not justify, his enterprise. Good, quiet soul! he would have remained tranquil and innocently occupied at Elba if the Allies had not broken their engagements with him; 'they are known,' says the *Morning Chronicle*, 'to have violated every part of their engagements to him.' Thus eager is the party to persuade us that this invasion is only a just reprisal and retaliation which the allies have provoked. . . . But what sort of feeling must that be, whose first impulse is always to find grounds of justification for an enemy? No sooner does Bonaparte re-appear on the stage, than his old admirers are eager to return to their allegiance."

[3] Cf. *Notes by Sir Robert Heron, Bart.*, pp. 53–4, for the spirit in which some back-bench Oppositionists voted. Heron, who had supported the Corn Law, wrote thus of the war against Napoleon: "On the most mature consideration I voted against the war. I incline to think it will be short and successful, but I believe it to be impolitick, if not unjust. I conceive the project of seating Louis XVIII upon the throne, to be a most dangerous precedent likely to be followed by any future conspiracy of Kings. Sixteen millions are already voted

were followed not by long seasons of useless hazard and sacrifice, as Opposition had inferred, but by the unexpectedly quick and decisive victory of Waterloo, Opposition's credit seemed to have sunk almost beyond repair and Ministers to have established an impregnable political position. Whitbread, indeed, Opposition's strongest critic of the war, put an end to his own life, on July 6th, and it is impossible not to believe that a sense of the shattered public credit, both of himself and his party, had much to do with the tragedy.[1] Events were, however, to prove that the "public" speedily found every justification for the existence of an alert and combative Opposition. The post-war distress, which followed the peace of 1815, was altogether more threatening than that which had appeared in 1814, and the "public" was eager to cheer on such attacks on Civil List and Service extravagances as had been initiated by Tierney, an Opposition leader luckier than Whitbread in his choice of special subject.[2]

This chapter cannot be ended more fittingly than by quoting, from a source friendly to Government, a description of the grave economic position Ministers were facing in the second half of 1815. Here is the *Annual Register*'s view, and it was an organ much more hopeful than some, since it scolded those who were giving way to complete despair:[3]

A temporary activity given to commerce by the revived intercourse with the American States revived several branches of manufacture from the decline into which they had fallen, and excited flattering expectations; but, as usual in such cases, the supply much exceeded the demand;

under various titles, as subsidies, and the expense of the campaign is estimated at eighty. I do not think the choice of all the Sovereigns on earth is, to us, worth one hundredth part of this sum in our present circumstances."

[1] *Kendal Chronicle*, July 15th, gave a full account of the inquest. It appeared that Whitbread had complained to a friend "that his public life was extinct—that he was derided—in short, he had become an outcast of society". He seemed even to fear, "that charges of a serious nature were exhibited against him, as well by the public voice, as by communications".

[2] On April 14th, Tierney, complaining of the "profusion and extravagance" in the Regent's Household and Civil List expenditures which regularly exceeded the Estimates, obtained much support and was granted a Select Committee though not with the powers he considered necessary. He divided, against Ministers, for greater powers and obtained 94 votes against 127. He appealed to the House again, on May 8th, and on this occasion obtained 119 votes against 175, "the minority," according to the *Annual Register*, "being not only considerable in number, but highly respectable in weight and character". Later, Tierney played his part in defeating Ministers' request for £6000 a year of additional income for the Royal Duke of Cumberland after he had undertaken a dubious marriage on the Continent. After several narrow divisions, Ministers were, on July 3rd, defeated by 126 votes against 125.

[3] *Annual Register*, 1815, Preface, pp. vi–vii.

the markets were overstocked; great quantities of goods lay unsold or unpaid for, and numerous failures were the consequence. The commercial distresses were unfortunately coincident with extraordinary difficulties under which the agricultural part of the community was labouring, occasioned by a reduction in the price of corn . . . rendering the cultivators wholly unable to indemnify themselves for greatly advanced rents, and augmented taxes. From these conjoint causes, there has rarely been a time of more widely-diffused complaint than the close of the current year; and all the triumphant sensations of national glory seem almost obliterated by general depression. . . . Few objects, domestic or foreign, remaining to excite political interest, the public feelings were nearly concentrated upon private and personal distress. If, however, the conclusion of this year be compared with those periods which afforded no other prospect than that of interminable war, with increasing foes and failing allies, it must be regarded as culpable discontent to be insensible of the meliorated condition of our country, when nothing is probably wanting to restore the enjoyment of the advantages so largely bestowed upon it, except patience, prudence, and economy.

[The very character of the hand-bill opposite suggests that it was "planted" by an anti-Jacobin to discredit his opponents. One keen anti-Jacobin was ultimately detected in this form of activity, but it was years later.]

CHAPTER XVIII

POST-WAR DISTRESS AND DISCONTENT

"It is a matter of history, that whilst the laurels were yet cool on the brows of our victorious soldiers on their second occupation of Paris, the elements of convulsion were at work amongst the masses of our labouring population; and that a series of disturbances commenced with the introduction of the Corn Bill in 1815, and continued, with short intervals, until the close of the year 1816. In London and Westminster riots ensued, and were continued for several days, whilst the bill was discussed; at Bridport, there were riots on account of the high price of bread; at Biddeford there were similar disturbances to prevent the exportation of grain; at Bury, by the unemployed, to destroy machinery; at Ely, not suppressed without bloodshed; at Newcastle-on-Tyne, by colliers and others; at Glasgow, where blood was shed, on account of the soup-kitchens; at Preston, by unemployed weavers; at Nottingham, by Luddites, who destroyed thirty frames; at Merthyr Tydville, on a reduction of wages; at Birmingham, by the unemployed; at Walsall, by the distressed; and December 7th, 1816, at Dundee, where owing to the high price of meal, upwards of one hundred shops were plundered. At this time the writings of William Cobbett suddenly became of great authority; they were read on nearly every cottage hearth in the manufacturing districts. . . ."

Samuel Bamford's *Radical*, Chapter 2.

A hand-written Bill, posted in London to excite uproar at Spa-Fields, December 2, 1816 (H.O. 40.4):

> Britons to Arms!
> The whole Country waits the Signal
> from London to fly to *Arms! Haste*
> break open gunsmiths and other likely places
> to find Arms! Run all
> *Constables* [through] who toutch a Man of Us.
> No Rise of Bread! No Regent!
> No *Castlereagh*. Off with their Heads:
> No Placemen, *Tythes* or Enclosures: No
> Bishops, only useless Lumber! Stand true or
> be slaves for Ever! N.B. 5000 of these Bills
> are up in the Town and printed ones with
> further particulars will appear in due time.
> Tricoloured Private Committee

WHEN Ministers decided the character of the Speech read from the Throne, on February 1, 1816, to the reassembled Parliament, they still seem to have been under the delusion that, though agriculture was admittedly distressed, manufactures and commerce could safely be described as being "in a flourishing condition".[1] Opposition was persistent and emphatic in denial, and if Ministers hoped that their case for keeping a 5 per cent Income Tax was strengthened by their questionable assertion, they were to find themselves woefully mistaken. It would seem that Vansittart, Chancellor of the Exchequer, and Castlereagh, Leader of the House, were both in hopes that Government's record of victory abroad would come to their aid if they quickly and openly avowed that they did not see their way to surrender a limited Income Tax for the first two or three years of peace.[2] But rapture over Waterloo had already declined so much, in the prevailing hard times, that Brougham, one of Opposition's hardest hitters, feared not to challenge Castelreagh in his own field of foreign affairs, demonstrating how dubious and unreliable were the Powers to whom Ministers' policy had given the domination of the Continent. It was on February 9th that Brougham opened the long line of British Parliamentary attacks on the Holy Alliance,[3] and when he had followed this up, on February 15th, with a mordant examination of the repulsive tyranny that had been seated in Spain by Britain's Peninsular exertions, Ministers' foreign policy lost much of the bloom which might have helped to carry the Income Tax.

Ministers' peace-making, too, was criticised from another angle by Grenville in the Lords. Moving an amendment against Government, on February 19th, he found Europe still too full of armed men and regretted Ministers' failure to call for a general

[1] *Kendal Chronicle*, February 10th.

[2] *Ibid.*, for Vansittart, on February 1st in the Commons to the following effect: "He had no difficulty in acknowledging that it was the intention of his Majesty's Ministers to propose *a renewal of the Income Tax at 5 per cent* upon the conviction that there was no mode of raising the supplies less oppressive, or so economical." Castlereagh said much the same thing that day, and, on the next, Vansittart allowed himself to be badgered into an admission that "he should propose it [the Income Tax] as a War Tax for two or three years" though he would grant some modifications, from the general level, in hard cases.

[3] *Ibid.*, February 17th, for Brougham's demand for the text of the Treaty of September 26, 1815, made between Austria, Russia and Prussia. Castlereagh agitatedly accused Brougham of trying to wreck the Confederacy, to which Brougham retorted by a demand for the text of the Treaty of January 6, 1815, which would have showed Castlereagh himself prepared, with the aid of Austria and France, to fight the intolerable demands of Russia and Prussia.

disarmament which might have spared Britain the effort, impossible to maintain in the long run, of keeping together a great army.[1] It was a skilful line to take and though rejected, for the moment, by large majorities in Lords and Commons,[2] it played its part in increasing the scrutiny, to which the Service Estimates were being subjected, and in heightening the dislike for making the very size of those Estimates, the reason for conceding Ministers the hated Income Tax. Hundreds of thousands must already have flocked to sign the numerous petitions against the Income Tax which had been set on foot directly Ministers' intentions were announced on February 1st. Many of the signatories, too, called loudly for a good deal more than the abolition of the Income Tax and a smaller Army. Working men, who did not pay Income Tax, might accept the view of the business men "reformers", who normally manned the platforms of the meetings they attended, that the tax was a most "oppressive" one and that the large military forces it would help to maintain in a time of peace would prove fatal to "liberty". But the comparatively new cry for Income Tax abolition could hardly bring from them the same response as did the older and much more familiar cries against pensions, sinecures and the swollen Civil List. How all these cries were often associated together in a general demand for economy and retrenchment may be illustrated from the principal speeches delivered at the great Westminster meeting of February against the Income Tax, a meeting whose platform was graced by both Westminster's M.P.s and by other popular Opposition figures, until these last were driven forth by the extremist line of speaking adopted by Henry Hunt.

The first important speech delivered at the Westminster meeting was given by Mr. Wishart, a local politician whose political ideal was Mr. Fox. His speech was thus summarised:[3]

> Mr. Wishart said, the Income-tax was an engine of oppression in the hands of any Minister, and its continuance during peace could only be meant to support a large standing army. They had the faith of Ministers pledged, that it should be abolished when the war ceased. What had we gained by the late war, to support which this tax was first imposed? Had we done any good to any nation on earth? (*Cries of No, no!*)

[1] *Ibid.*, February 24, 1816.
[2] *Ibid.* The division in the Lords was 40–104 and in the Commons it was 77–240.
[3] *Ibid.*, March 2nd.

We had restored three Families to their thrones, that would formerly have overthrown this country if they could; men totally destitute of every principle of civil and religious liberty.... We had given two ancient Republics to two Monarchs one of whom was despotic, and we had permitted the spoliation and dismemberment of Poland to be consummated. But the records of history would hand down the names of those men to posterity, who had, unblushingly, permitted these wrongs to be done. We had added a little to our own territory by the war; but of what use it could be, except that of increasing patronage, he knew not. On the subject of a standing army, ... he was afraid this standing army was intended to prevent them from the exercise of their Constitutional privileges...."

Much more unorthodox than Mr. Wishart's speech was Henry Hunt's who had already made himself such a firebrand reputation that all the Opposition Parliamentarians, save Burdett and Cochrane, quitted the meeting when he began to speak. Hunt was reported to this effect:[1]

The Gentleman who opened the discussion had said, if the advice of an illustrious Statesman, formerly their representative, had been taken, the Income Tax would not have been imposed.... He supposed that the worthy Gentleman meant Mr. Fox; but did he mean Mr. Fox in or out of place? Did he not raise the Property-tax from 6½ to 10 per cent. It was the Whigs who raised the Pensions of the Royal Family and their Judges, on the ground of the dearness of provisions; and it was for these reasons he wished to guard them against the party, some of whom were present—(He meant Mr. Brougham, Mr. Brand, Mr. Bennett, and Mr. Lambton, who had come to the Hustings, but had left the place when he began to speak). He said, Westminster would not do for those Gentlemen. He had a list in his hand of men who held sinecures; in which he found that Mr. Ponsonby enjoyed £4,000 a year from a sinecure, and Mr. Horner £2,000, as one of the Commissioners for the payment of the Nabob of Arcot's Debts, which he knew well enough would never be paid. He then read a list of 22 persons, enjoying sinecures to the amount of nearly £200,000. If the country was but fairly represented, they would then get their taxes, the sinecures, and the salaries of the Regent and the Royal Family reduced.

It was not so much Hunt's speech and others like it that Ministers had to fear. Rather was it the scores of more usual orations delivered up and down the country as every agitated commercial and farming community prepared to petition.[2] By

[1] *Kendal Chronicle*, March 2nd.

[2] *Ibid.*, March 16th, for the City meeting where the opening speech against the Income Tax was made by the very commercial figure who, in 1798, had moved the resolutions committing the Merchants and Bankers of the City to support of Pitt and the Income Tax.

March 5th it was plain that Ministers' proposal was in the greatest possible Parliamentary danger, and Vansittart attempted a quite vigorous ripost to what, doubtless, seemed to him the selfish agitation of the comfortable classes against the tax. Not only was the tax, he claimed, to be reduced to a shilling in the pound but he was proposing to make a very great concession beyond that at a cost of a million, to the hard-hit farming community. Farmers, who had hitherto been treated as though their taxable income was three-quarters of the rent they were paying, would now be taxed on a third of their rent, and farmers paying less than £150 of annual rent would be exempted altogether. And Vansittart denounced as specially unjust those misrepresentations which alleged that the tax bore on the poor and not on the rich. Of the 1,100,000 families engaged in trade and manufactures, only 266,000 were called upon to make returns, and, of these, 169,000 were exempted as returning an income of less than £150 a year.[1] In this argument, Vansittart was, perhaps, evading that part of the case against the Income Tax which rested on its failure to differentiate between the earned income of the struggling professional or commercial man and the unearned income of land- or fund-holders. But the professional and commercial classes, in raising the cry that spelled the doom of the Income Tax, themselves assumed the responsibility for concentrating the great weight of national taxation in the field of the Indirect Taxes, which bore far too hardly on the real poor and not enough on themselves.

Meanwhile the critical reception that had been given in Parliament to the numbers and expenditure proposed for the Army threatened Ministers from a second direction. On February 28th, Opposition had already raised a vote of 121–241 against going into Committee on Government's Army Estimates.[2] And when, on March 4th, members were called upon to sanction an army of 176,615, it hardly seemed to do Lord Palmerston much good to point out that 30,000 of this number represented occupation troops in France and that 30,480 more would soon be disbanded.[3]

[1] *Ibid.*, March 9th. Vansittart's references to the Income Tax's alleged bearing on the poor rather than on the rich must be interpreted to be understood. The "poor" referred to, in some attacks on the Income Tax, were struggling professional men maintaining appearances with difficulty and finding the tax much harder to pay, it was claimed, than a rich landowner or dividend-receiver, subject to no risk and no exertion and yet paying at the same rate as those whose precarious incomes might cease, in a moment, from illness, bad trade, or a dozen other causes.

[2] *Ibid.*

[3] *Annual Register*, 1816, General History, p. 11.

The mere figure of 176,615 as a peace-time force seems to have frightened or disturbed many, who remembered the pre-1792 days, with troops numbering not a quarter of that total, and who failed to recall that there was now Malta and Corfu, Trinidad and Ceylon, the Cape and St. Helena to garrison, not to mention much else to do including the policing of Ireland's relatively huge and discontented population. Even some of those, who made allowance for such things, found cause for disquiet in Palmerston's admission that the 176,615 figure was still not the complete total of the military force at Ministers' disposal since it did not include the troops in India nor what remained of the embodied Militia and the Foreign Corps in British pay. It is, perhaps, hardly surprising to find that the two most influential "independents" in the House, Wilberforce and Bankes, were both critical in a fashion that promised serious trouble for Ministers directly consideration of details began.[1]

Ministers' most trying day on the Army Estimates came on March 11th. Opposition opened by enforcing the taking of the Estimates in detail. And on the first proposal, that for the Household Cavalry, Opposition moved that the force of 1724 officers and men, suggested by Ministers, should be reduced by half, which would still leave it stronger, by 100, than it was in 1791.[2] When Ministers defeated this suggestion in a division of 21–128, they were responsibly opposed once more in their demand for 12,367 dragoon guards and dragoons.[3] Nor did the struggle end when Opposition's suggestion for a reduction of 3000 in this figure was defeated by 210 votes against 122. Tierney demanded the adjournment partly, it would seem, to ensure that other items contested by the Opposition should be heard by a full House and partly, perhaps, because he wanted some Civil List Papers laid on the Table, which would assist the savage attack that he had begun earlier in the Session on the Regent's incurable extravagance and

[1] *Kendal Chronicle.* Bankes, on March 4th, wanted to enforce retrenchment on Ministers by a direct defeat while Wilberforce, on March 6th, thought that "the home establishment seemed justly chargeable with excess for purposes of parade and military splendour".

[2] *Ibid.*, March 16th. Opposition's mover was Calcraft, M.P. for Rochester and Clerk of the Ordnance in the Ministry of 1806–7. His interest in the Army was inherited from a father who had been the greatest Army agent and contractor of the eighteenth century and then developed into an Opposition and Reform politician.

[3] *Ibid.* Opposition's mover here was Charles Wynn, M.P. for Montgomeryshire and Under-Secretary for Home Affairs in the Ministry of 1806–7.

Ministers' culpable failure to keep it in check.[1] Tierney was, however, beaten and the Committee went on to another contested Estimate, that for the Cavalry and Waggon Train. The hour was late, and the House beginning to empty when Government carried this Estimate by 126 votes against 62.

But the determined tug-of-war on March 11th was only a preliminary to the contest of the following week when, on March 18th, the Chancellor, in Committee of Ways and Means, moved the Income-Tax resolution, designed to provide, in large measure, the wherewithal for these and other contested Estimates. On this occasion, the "independents" threw their weight decisively against the Ministry, Wilberforce, for example, declaring that the heart of the question raised by Government was whether the House should relieve the money market or themselves. It was a view apparently justified by Ministers' refusal to touch over eleven millions a year going into the Sinking Fund and maintaining British "credit", and the result was a sensational defeat of Government by 238 votes against 201.[2] For a day or two there were the usual excited political rumours, the most decided of which affirmed, not that the Opposition would come into office, but that either Peel or Huskisson would displace Vansittart at the Exchequer. The Ministers, however, decided to stand together, and, while giving way to Parliament on the Income Tax and more, they resolved to lay on Parliament the blame for what should follow. Castlereagh was

[1] The papers were laid on the Table in the midnight hours, after another debate and division. The severity of Tierney's language of February 28th, when Vansittart admitted that the Civil List had again been exceeded but that Papers would be laid before the House and a "better regulation" adopted was thus indicated by the *Kendal Chronicle* (March 9th): "Mr. Tierney observed, that notwithstanding the Bill of last year for regulating the Civil List, the Rt. Hon. Gentleman now admitted that an arrear had occurred. . . . *Hear, hear*! . . . He hoped that the House would teach some person a lesson in future, and that he would be compelled to pay his own debts. It was in vain for Parliament to pay arrears of the Civil List, to provide a sum of £500,000 for the liquidation of demands for purposes of an extravagant nature, if the person, whose extravagancies were the object of the solicitude and care of Parliament, should, instead of attending to the lesson of gratitude thus taught him, appropriate the money to other purposes. . . ."

[2] Cf. *Annual Register*, 1816, General History, pp. 25–6, for a short version of William Smith's speech, stressing one side of mercantile objections to the Tax, not hitherto noticed: "He said, that the disquiet experienced by commercial men, at having their concerns laid open to the world, would be very little alleviated by any of the expedients or modifications now suggested. . . . It was probable that a large portion of the commercial interest must now be liable to heavy losses; and it followed, that many traders must either pay 5 per cent on a supposed profit, or go to the commissioner and confess his loss: rather than do this numbers would pay the tax. . . ."

particularly emphatic when facing the exultant Opposition on March 20th. Here is one report:[1]

> Lord Castlereagh said, with respect to the Property Tax, he was prepared to contend that it was a wise, just, and politic measure, intended to relieve the agricultural interest and the lower orders of the people.—*Loud cries of hear, hear!*—But the rich had relieved themselves from the burden, and therefore he must protest against the decision of Parliament, which he must consider as unwise; if they had attended to the modified imposition as proposed by his Right Hon. Friend, the people would have been more relieved than otherwise—*Hear, hear.*

This was probably the best way to handle the Parliament of the day, and Ministers spent the rest of the Session in comparative security despite their having to borrow practically all the millions they had surrendered when giving up the Income Tax and the "war Malt-Tax", an impost almost equally obnoxious to the suffering farming community.[2] Ministers, of course, had some uncomfortable moments, especially when suspected of putting on a greater show of "retrenchment" than they were really undertaking. A particularly embarrassing question that arose almost immediately was why the energetic but unpopular Croker had had his salary as Secretary of the Admiralty raised by £1000 a year, to £4000, at the very moment when his responsibilities had declined with the advent of peace. Croker had undoubtedly deserved well of Ministers for services in Parliament and the Press but he was widely enough disliked, as a low-born but sharp-tongued Ministerial mercenary from Ireland, for the rather close division of 159–130 to result from the very strange manner of "retrenchment" that had been practised in his case.[3]

There was another sharp contest on Admiralty "retrenchments" on March 27th, and, on April 25th, after the Easter adjournment had come and gone without a sign of returning prosperity, there was a division of 102–158 for a motion demanding a reduction in the Military Establishment, in the Public Expenditure, and in

[1] *Kendal Chronicle*, March 30th.

[2] *Ibid.*, for Ponsonby's estimate of two millions as the yield of the "war Malt-Tax".

[3] Croker was a leading contributor to the *Quarterly Review*, and was also one of the authors of those literary squibs against Opposition that had just been collected as *The New Whig Guide*. Brougham delivered the most slashing attack against him on March 20th and Tierney on March 27th. Croker's reply to Tierney on March 27th was a good Parliamentary effort, probably his best up to this time.

every department of the State. Then, on May 6th, Tierney, now well equipped with Civil List matter, obtained a division of 122–213 for a Civil List Committee that might have made the Regent's life unbearable, and, next day, another Committee on salary and department increases, demanded by Lord Althorp, found 126 supporters against Government's 169. And when, on May 24th, Ministers announced their own Civil List plans, Tierney induced 116 members against 230 to support his contention that the plans were a trick and a trap, leaving Parliament liable to constant calls for money while getting no vestige of claim over the immense sums hoarded for the Crown as Droits of Admiralty.[1] Meanwhile, the first serious rioting of the distressed countryside had broken out in East Anglia, and any suspect Ministerial "job" was doubly liable to reprimand. Such a "job", it was believed, was revealed when in their Exchequers Consolidation Bill for uniting the British and Irish Exchequers, Ministers made provision for two Irish Vice-Treasurers, one deputy to the other, and moved for a salary of £3500 to the principal. According to Opposition, a sinecure of £3500 per annum was here being deliberately created, and after some warm contest in Parliament, Ministers were defeated on Ponsonby's amendment to reduce the proposed salary to £2000. This check to Government, administered on June 17th, was the last important event of the Session.[2] On July 2nd Parliament was prorogued.

But though Ministers' Parliamentary troubles were now over for some months, the country's economic situation was worsening rapidly enough to cause them the greatest anxiety. Thus, the most harrowing stories were coming from the coal and iron districts of the Black Country, where large numbers, very prosperous during the war, were completely without employment and almost equally without hope of adequate Parish relief since they themselves formed the major part of the affected parishes' population.[3] Ministers must therefore have encouraged the Royal Dukes to take the lead at the London meeting of July 29th, called for the purpose of raising a Relief Fund. In view, however, of the growing distress

[1] *Kendal Chronicle*, June 1st.

[2] *Annual Register*, 1816, General History, pp. 62–3, makes a considerable matter of Government's defeat. Of Opposition's delight there is the following description: "The majority, though so inconsiderable, was received with loud and long cheering."

[3] *Kendal Chronicle*, August 3rd, contained some first-hand information under the title, *Distress of the Iron Manufacturers in Staffordshire.*

and discontent, the Royal Dukes had to listen to language wounding to their dignity, and the matter did not end there. The subscriptions to the Relief Fund, made by Royal personages and other magnates, were narrowly watched and were always found inadequate by the discontented. The state things had reached by August 21st may be gauged from the language used at the City of London Livery meeting of that day. In the course of a violent Reform speech, a Mr. Thompson spoke thus on Royal, ducal and ecclesiastical subscriptions to the Relief Fund:[1]

> One would have expected from these people that their subscriptions would, at least, have borne some proportion to what they received from the public, which they were professing to relieve. As for our Royal Queen . . . she had only given £300. If she had acted like a Queen she would have given £300,000. The Prince Regent had given £500. . . . The Duke of Wellington who fought the battles of despotism, had given £200. And Mr. Wilberforce gave £50 with a flood of tears (*loud laugh*). The Archbishop of Canterbury . . . whose see . . . was worth £20,000 a year, had given £100. . . . He saw in the list the Princess Charlotte and the Prince Leopold of Saxe-Coburgh £400. . . . Now was not all this a proof either that those who subscribed at this meeting either did not believe the distresses of the country were as great as they said, or if they believed, that they did not care about it. (*Applauses*)

And yet Mr. Thompson's address was comparatively tame when compared with Henry Hunt's, who was that day applauded in Guildhall as he had never been applauded there before.[2]

It must be concluded from the readiness of commercial men, in the provincial centres, to repeat, during the autumn, some of the strongest language of the capital's "Jacobins", that "distress" was growing steadily in the closing months of 1816. The Staffordshire meeting of September 30th; some of the Chester speaking of October 4th;[3] the creation of a Whig Club at Gloucester; the

[1] *Kendal Chronicle*, August 31st.

[2] *Ibid.* Hunt's treatment of the subscription list ran thus: "The Marquis of Camden, one of the sinecure placemen, had £38,000 a year, and had given £100. . . . If he had given a penny in the pound, it would have been £158. . . . The Princess Charlotte of Wales and the Prince of Cobourg had received about £120,000 in this year, and they had given £400. If they had given a penny in the pound, their subscription would have been £500. . . . But what had the Marquis Camden done? What had George Rose done? What had Mrs. Hunn, the mother of Mr. Canning done, done for the country, from which she received £500 a year? What were the merits of the two amiable Misses Hunn, who were also saddled upon the taxes. . . ?"

[3] The file of the *Kendal Chronicle* (its full title was the *Westmorland Advertiser and Kendal Chronicle*) has supplied the list of instances. It is, perhaps, worth

re-election of the "reforming" Alderman Wood to the Lord Mayorship of London; the Sheffield resolutions of October 9th; the Norwich and Southwark meetings of October 16th and 21st; the disorders in the Monmouthshire and Glamorganshire coal and iron districts that began on October 17th; the Glasgow, Manchester and Cornwall resolutions that preceded the meeting of "distressed" London artisans, called to Spa-Fields for November 15th—all these provide but a fraction of the evidence to prove the very dangerous anti-Ministerial temper growing up in very diverse parts of the country. An even more significant part of the evidence is to be found in the readiness with which numbers of hitherto cautious editors of country-town newspapers took up the cry for "Retrenchment and Reform". The tone of comment reigning, for example, not merely in the *Liverpool Mercury* or the *Leeds Mercury*, but even in the *Kendal Chronicle* is normally a surprise for the historical student, aware of the powerful local coteries, gathered, sometimes, in Pitt Clubs, who had hitherto seemed able to decide the fate of a local newspaper by their disapproval. Here is the editor of the *Kendal Chronicle* explaining, in his first number for 1817, why his writing had become unfriendly to the Government and why, nevertheless, his paper had grown in influence and circulation:[1]

> Those of his readers who will take the trouble to peruse the first numbers of the *Chronicle* in 1816, will soon perceive that he favoured the Ministerial party, and he did this because he was led to conclude that the Minister intended to relieve the people from their burdens by a rigorous system of retrenchment, but no sooner was he convinced by incontrovertible evidence, that the administration assiduously recommended economy and at the same time was determined to pursue the old system of extravagance, than he clearly understood the import of their words, which was to recommend the people to be parsimonious at home, that the government might spend as it had done, and persist in the expensive habits which it had contracted in the course of a long war, unequalled as to the prodigality of blood and treasure. This conviction easily pointed out to him the line of conduct he had to pursue, and shewed him it was his duty to tell his neighbours and

remarking that the Staffordshire and Chester meetings had been called, not at the instance of the discontented, but at the instance of the "best" people in the locality in order that local "relief" funds might be started. But proceedings were dominated, in both cases, by "exclamations of an opposition character" among which the reporters noted "Open the ports! No Corn Bill! We don't want subscriptions! lower the rents! Abolish the sinecures! &c., &c."

[1] *Kendal Chronicle*, January 4, 1817.

fellow-countrymen, what they had to expect if the present system of profusion is persisted in, to tell them that a continuance of the measures which have been too long pursued, will in fine swallow up their money in taxes and transfer their estates to pensioners, sinecurists, placemen, and favourites. This frankness was the cause of the obloquy with which he has been aspersed, but he feels the pleasure of informing the public that if his peace of mind has been ruffled . . . the interest of the Kendal paper has been promoted by an accession of readers, as well as by an accession of valuable correspondents.

Far more dangerous to Ministers, however, than any other writer in the country was Cobbett who began, in the autumn of 1816, to make use of a gap he had discovered in the Press and Stamp Laws and to issue, every week, a twopenny reprint of his *Register* which achieved what was for those times an astonishing working-class circulation.[1] Some of these reprinted *Registers* were among the best things Cobbett ever wrote, and there is plenty of evidence to show that Cobbett's "Twopenny Trash" furnished the main stimulus to the extensive formation of working-class Reform Clubs in Lancashire and Yorkshire at this time. It might be worth giving the titles of some of Cobbett's most influential issues towards the end of 1816: *To the Journeymen and Labourers —on the Cause of their present Miseries* (November 2nd); *To the People of Scotland on the Meeting at Paisley* (November 9th); *To the Readers of the Register* (November 16th); *The Whigs* (November 23rd); *A Letter to the Luddites* (November 30th); *A Letter to the Lord Mayor of London* (December 7th); and *A Letter to Henry Hunt, Esq.* (December 14th). Fired by such writing, politically-minded working-men formed Hampden Clubs in their own locality; entered into relations with neighbouring clubs for the preparation of a joint petition; and, finally, resolved to send

[1] *Cobbett's Weekly Political Register*, for October 26, 1816 (Vol. 31, No. 17), made this announcement: "Still, however, there is one way which these Argus-eyed laws have left us to circulate our observations in a cheap form without exposing ourselves to penalties other than those which the Attorney-General and a special jury may think proper to inflict. *Open sheets*; that is to say a sheet of paper, *not folded up*, nor printed with an intention to be folded up, requires no [4*d.*] stamp, and may be circulated and sold without any." At this stage, Cobbett thought the price would have to be 2½*d.*, but only 2*d.* was asked for the reprint of the *Register* of the following week, at which price (instead of the normal price of 1*s.* 0½*d.*) it achieved so enormous a circulation—44,000 was soon announced—that Cobbett reprinted some back-numbers as well as re-printing every new number in the cheap form. On December 14th, Cobbett announced a new discovery. He could and would print in octavo form, as a pamphlet, and such a trifling tax would be payable that the price of the cheap *Register* would still be 2*d.* despite the much greater convenience of form.

delegates to co-operate with the Hampden Club of London in securing Parliamentary attention for their wishes. It was on January 1st, 1817, for example, that twenty-one petitioning bodies in South Lancashire declared for Universal Male Suffrage from the age of eighteen; a member of parliament for every 20,000 inhabitants; the exclusion of all placemen and pensioners; and no property or other qualification for members save "talent and virtue".[1] And here is a handbill issued by the two Hampden Clubs of Derby:[2]

TAXES at the WILL of the BOROUGH FACTION

Or Taxes according to the CONSTITUTION,

"Choose you this day which you prefer; as for me and my House we prefer the Constitution."

Hampden.

A REFORM in the REPRESENTATION of the PEOPLE in the COMMONS HOUSE of Parliament, is the only measure which affords any hope of seeing UNNECESSARY WAR, with its ruinous Expense, avoided; USELESS OFFICES, SINECURE PLACES, AND UNMERITED PENSIONS abolished; the POOR RATES considerably reduced; and such ECONOMY in every part of the State introduced, as to enable a virtuous Parliament materially to lessen those TAXES which bear the most heavily on the GROWERS OF CORN, or on the LABOURING CLASSES OF THE COMMUNITY; namely, the TAXES ON CANDLES, SOAP, SALT, and LEATHER.

A PETITION FOR SUCH REFORM

lies for Signatures at a house for that purpose in Rotten-row.

There are Two HAMPDEN CLUBS in Derby:

One is held at the Holly-bush, Bridge-street, every Monday evening, at seven o'clock;

And the other at the Rose and Crown, Corn-market, every Tuesday evening, at seven o'clock.

If all discontent had expressed itself in the orderly form taken in South Lancashire and Derby, Ministers, despite their alarm, would have had some trouble in asking Parliament for "Gagging Bills" directed against "seditious" meetings and publications. But a case for repression had already been supplied by "violence" enacted in the capital, where there had been petty disorders on November 15th, after one Spa-Fields meeting addressed by Henry

[1] Samuel Bamford's *Radical*, p. 10, amply confirmed by spies' reports in H.O. 40.4.

[2] *Kendal Chronicle*, January 11th.

Hunt, and more serious disturbances on December 2nd, when Hunt had assembled a second Spa-Fields meeting. For days before the first Spa-Fields meeting, pro-Government newspapers had decried and denounced it[1] and, after it had been held, they eagerly pointed to the tricoloured flag and the cap of liberty which had been displayed during its proceedings and to the gangs of boys and roughs who had attacked butchers' and bakers' shops when the proceedings were over.

The second Spa-Fields meeting, of course, lent itself much more conspicuously to the alarmists, for not even the London Corresponding Society, in the palmiest days of enthusiasm for the French Revolution, had sent forth a mob to break into gun-shops, seize arms and summon the soldiers in the Tower to side with the people. The police investigation, that followed, revealed that the impulsion to the Spa-Fields meetings had come largely from a tiny organisation of poverty-stricken extremists, who believed that the private appropriation of land by landlords was the cause of most of Society's ills and who had supplied the leader to the arms-seizing mob that had left Hunt's meeting on December 2nd. For weeks the newspapers were filled with rumours as to the disappearance of this leader, known as "the younger Watson", and with reports as to the arms that had been found on his father, "the elder Watson", when he was arrested. Thanks, however, to the Lord Mayor's patient and scrupulous examination of the incriminated extremists, the "Spencean Philanthropists" emerged as beings a good deal less terrible and a good deal more human than the scaremonger could have wished.[2] Criticism of the Ministers was back, before long, at its old level, and one would hardly guess from, say, the strong language of the *Kendal Chronicle* of January 4th that there had been an "insurrection".

[1] Cf. *The Globe*, November 14th: "The Treasury Journals are greatly alarmed at the Public Meeting here announced, and are in full cry to run it down . . . *The Morning Post* . . . *The Courier* . . . *The Times*." The Home Office, it may be mentioned, had already procured the services of an informer, high in the Counsels of the discontented, and the reports passing from T. Thomas to Sir N. Conant between November 9, 1816, and February 9, 1817, make very interesting reading. (H.O. 40.4. *Metropolis Supplementary Papers*.)

[2] A. W. Waters, *Spence and his Political Works*, shows that Spence had died in September 1814, but had left a following for his plan of Agrarian Equality, a following still, in 1819, celebrating his birthday, June 21, as a species of anniversary. Spence had been very poor and disinterested all his life, and poverty seemed also the badge of nearly all his followers who, in January 1817, announced themselves as meeting weekly in four sections, Soho, Moorfields, Carnaby-market, and Borough.

"The period is not far distant," wrote the *Kendal Chronicle*,[1] "when the parliament is to be assembled for the dispatch of business; and awful and unprecedented will that business be. Herculean and bold indeed must Ministers be, to look the nation in the face—to account for treasure wantonly expended—corruption unblushingly continued—and extravagance pursued in every branch of the exchequer. A show of bustle is now evinced—retrenchments, too, we learn, are taking place; but the bustle bespeaks the pettifogger—and the retrenchment testifies the little, incomprehensive policy of the little and corrupt mind. Yes—clerks, poor clerks in office are sent as outcasts on the world, to starve and perish for the want of common necessaries of life; whilst the pampered sinecurist may fatten on the public wants, and riot on the public misery.... Heart-rending indeed are the scenes to which we are every day exposed—wide and desolating is the misery that stalks abroad—the truth can now no longer be disguised—*reduced taxation* and a *strict reform* alone can save us from one unsparing ruin.... Retrenchment must take place; but a *reform* in the constitution of the House of Commons must first take place. The corruptions of that Chamber have caused all our miseries."

So large a proportion of the business and farming community shared the *Kendal Chronicle*'s sentiments at this stage that it seems very doubtful whether even Spa-Fields and the "insurrection" would, by themselves, have availed to persuade Parliament to carry the anti-Jacobin programme that Ministers considered essential. But events came to Government's aid in an unexpected fashion when, on January 28th, mob-displays were made against the Regent on his way to and from the opening of Parliament.[2] Alarmists, official and unofficial, even deduced that there had been an attempt on the Regent's life from the fact that there were round holes in the State Coach glass which might have been made by air-gun pellets fired by a would-be assassin lurking in a tree along the route. This wild and interested alarmism was eventually to bring a flood of derision upon the Government's case but, for the time being, it helped Ministers effectually enough. That very same day the House of Lords summoned Lord James Murray, who had been in the Coach with the Regent, to give evidence and

[1] *Kendal Chronicle*, January 4, 1817.

[2] *Ibid.*, February 1st: "As the Prince passed through the Park, he was received by a mixture of applause and disapprobation. On the return of the Royal procession, the mal-contents had increased in number ... and they broke out into acts of violence, accompanied with the most foul, shocking, insulting and blasphemous language. Gravel stones, and other things, were thrown at the Royal carriages.... The glass of the door of the State carriage ... was broke three times...."

heard his belief that shots had been fired;[1] a Conference between the two Houses next followed and heard an exact parallel alleged between the existing situation and that which, in 1795, had induced Pitt to pass the Seditious Meetings Bill and the Treasonable Practices Bill; and Ministers were invited to lay all their "information", like Pitt, before Committees of Secrecy. "Green Bag" Committees were accordingly appointed in both Houses, and before them was laid the accumulation of "alarmist" documents and reports of which Government was now possessed. By February 19th the Commons were listening to a *Report* which attempted to prove that all the scattered instances of discontent throughout the country were merely part of one gigantic plot to effect a violent revolution by force of arms. In the words of the *Report*:[2]

> There was a Committee established which directed the operations of the whole.... Lists were made of all who could be relied on. An insurrection had been agreed upon, and it was intended that there should be a general rising at the dead of the night, that the soldiers should be surprised, to set fire to all the barracks, and to gain possession of the artillery... a machine had been proposed for the purpose of clearing the streets of cavalry.... The map of London was investigated, Spa-fields was considered the most proper place for such a meeting, as being most contiguous to the Bank and the Tower, which were both to be seized on.... A committee of public safety, following the example of the French Revolution, was appointed, consisting of twenty-four members.... Various plans were laid to bring over as many soldiers as possible to the cause.... Plans were laid for gaining over the sailors in the River.... A great quantity of pike-heads had been ordered.... About Manchester the greatest exultation prevailed previous to the Meeting, and the ruin of the Tower and the Bank was fully expected as the commencement of a revolution.... There are several of these Societies in Glasgow and other parts of Scotland. There it is the leading principle that the existing Government and present state of things shall be overturned....

The Parliamentary road was now clear for Ministers' anti-Jacobin programme, contained mainly in four Bills for suspending

[1] The *Stamford News*, one of the most "scurrilous" papers in the country, attempted this sarcasm: "Our readers we know to be particularly anxious for the fate of the... of St. James's; but as yet we cannot inform them whether his Royal Highness was shot at from the trees *or the stars*; and if shot *at all*, whether the Lord of the Bedchamber *swallowed the bullets*. It is said that the plot of Spa-fields having failed in effect, it has been thought expedient by the Ministers to prepare a new one; but this is not credible."

[2] *Kendal Chronicle*, March 2nd.

Habeas Corpus, and for punishing more severely Traitorous Practices, Seditious Assemblies and Publications, and the Seduction of Soldiers and Sailors from their Duty. Though arrests of the "seditious" were freely reported even before the new programme became law, severity was, fortunately, not the Government's only word. Considerable concessions were made to "public opinion" in a number of different directions. There were important reductions in the Service Estimates;[1] the Prince Regent made a "voluntary" surrender of a proportion of his Civil List revenues while the "great sinecurist", Lord Camden, "volunteered" even more;[2] and a Finance Committee was at last, with official approval, permitted to prepare the way for the abolition of such posts as the Chief Justiceships in Eyre and the Governorship of the Isle of Wight.[3] In the economic sphere, too, Ministers undertook something positive when they made £500,000 available in Britain and a quarter of a million in Ireland for financing, on loan, the completion of approved "public works", capable of giving much employment but standing still for want of money.[4] Meanwhile Ministers' task, in carrying their "Gagging Bills" had been facilitated by further reports of "insurrection" plans. There were alarms and arrests at Glasgow in February while, at Manchester, the "Blanketeers' " preparations to march on London, during the following month, in order to "undeceive" the Regent on the character of his Ministers led to much apprehension and numerous arrests for "conspiracy" and worse.[5]

The "Gagging Bills" were passed the more easily because of an almost fatal split in the Opposition. Grey and Ponsonby went very far indeed in their attempt to meet the view of Grenville and

[1] *Hansard's Parliamentary Debates*, February 7th, for Castlereagh beginning the policy of concession. Army reductions were announced of 13,000 men in overseas stations and 5000 at home, 3000 of these being from the expensive cavalry. Naval man-power, too, was to be reduced from 33,000 to 19,000.

[2] *Ibid.*, for the Prince Regent's assigning £50,000 of his year's income to the service of the State. Castlereagh also announced similar sacrifices by "the public servants of the Crown". The news that Lord Camden had "abandoned every claim to any greater amount than £2700 per annum" from his "great sinecure" came somewhat later and was read as part of Ministers' attempt to induce the "great" Pensioners and Sinecurists to content themselves, for the period of "distress" at least, with something like the remuneration of a Secretary of State.

[3] *Ibid.*, March 27th, for mention also of the proposed abolition of the great Exchequer sinecures of Auditor, Clerk of the Pells and the four Tellers.

[4] *Ibid.*, April 28th, for further loans available to hard-hit parishes.

[5] *Kendal Chronicle*, March 15th: "We are authorised to say that not less than 200 persons are apprehended."

Fitzwilliam who held that the *Reports* from the Committees of Secrecy completely justified the legislation for which Ministers were asking. Grey and Ponsonby, of course, had their own reasons for regarding Hunt and Cobbett, and even Burdett and Cochrane, as among the most reckless incendiaries known in British history and were prepared to allow two of the Ministers' four Bills through without opposition—the Bill for the safety and preservation of the person of H.R.H. the Prince Regent against treasonable practices and the Bill for the prevention and punishment of attempts to seduce persons serving in H.M.'s forces from their duty or allegiance. But when Grey drew the line at Habeas Corpus Suspension and the virtual suppression of public meetings under the Seditious Assemblies Bill, and Grenville chose to rise later in the debate and offer Ministers his support and justification,[1] the plight of the Opposition became desperate. Despite considerable demonstrations against Ministers' plans, led, thanks to the City Reformers, by the Corporation and the Livery of London, Opposition failed to raise a serious vote even against the most dubious clauses of Ministers' Bills. There was an objectionable clause, for example, in the Seditious Assemblies Bill which made it a capital crime to stay in a meeting an hour after a single magistrate should have ordered its dispersal by virtue of powers conferred in the Bill. Yet when Gurney and Mackintosh suggested that the death penalty was excessive, they were beaten in a division of 26 against 70,[2] while when the veteran W. Smith moved that "two or more magistrates" should be read in place of "one or more magistrates" as the depositaries of the vast repressive powers that were being given, he found it inadvisable to divide the House and reveal the paucity of the support he would have obtained. Presumably, the "plots" and "treasonable practices" just then being reported from Glasgow and Manchester explain the unfortunate balance of forces in Parliament.[3] The balance of forces was, in fact, such that Sidmouth, the Home Secretary, ventured on a new interpretation of the law of arrest when

[1] *Hansard's Parliamentary Debates*, Lords, February 24th. Even on the projected Seditious Meetings legislation, Grey offered to accept that part of Ministers' plan which would prevent meetings being called near the Houses of Parliament when they were in session, and more. [2] *Ibid.*, March 10th.

[3] *Kendal Chronicle*, March 8th and 15th. The Ministerial majorities are also explained by the fact that the magistrates' large powers against "seditious" meetings and debating societies were only being temporarily granted. They ran out in July 1818.

scandalous or seditious libel was in question. In a Circular addressed to the Lord-Lieutenants on March 27th, these were asked to inform the magistrates that the Law Officers of the Crown held that magistrates could order the arrest of vendors of published material, sworn to as seditious or blasphemous, and that the vendors could also be proceeded against for failure to procure licences under the Hawkers and Pedlars Act.[1] It was obviously meant to frighten out of business, and often before there could be a specific Court decision of libel, the hundreds of people who were selling Cobbett's *Register*, Wooler's *Black Dwarf*, and Hone's *Reformist's Register* and *Parodies*.[2] And Cobbett's flight to America, in order to avoid the arrest certainly threatening him as soon as Habeas Corpus was suspended, must have discouraged the vendors even before they had learned of the Circular. Government, in fact, felt strong enough to decide, in May, that it would have Habeas Corpus Suspension extended beyond July 1st, the limit of time originally asked for. On June 5th they obtained the re-nomination of the Committees of Secrecy to study new "Green Bags" of confidential documents demonstrating to a certainty, it was claimed, the necessity for Habeas Corpus Suspension to be extended over the period of the approaching Prorogation of Parliament. Ministers did, in fact, by such means, procure the prolongation of Habeas Corpus Suspension until January 31, 1818[3] though, long before that time, the "public" had become so sceptical about Ministers' hair-raising "information" and the agents, who supplied it, that Government often fared badly, at jurors' hands, when it undertook political or Press prosecutions. The next chapter shall begin with the most characteristic examples.

APPENDIX

The Use of Spies and Informers as instanced in two typical documents from Home Office Papers, H.O. 40.4.

Charles Wicksted Ethelston to Lord Sidmouth, January 16, 1817.

In consequence of my suggestion that C. and F. might be made

[1] *Ibid.*, April 10th.

[2] Both Wooler and Hone soon had informations filed against them by the Attorney-General. Their trials and acquittals made history.

[3] It could have run on somewhat longer but Ministers themselves offered to end it, as their first Act of the 1818 Session. They hoped, of course, it would make a "popular" beginning to the Session.

useful to Government, I received directions from your Lordship to employ them . . .

With respect to the credit due to their communications, I have every reason to be satisfied having carefully compared them with other collateral testimony procured by secret agents in the pay of the Constables of Manchester.

Informer C. reports on his activities after an Eccles Reform meeting, January 13, 1817.

C. came home linked in the arm of Bagulley. . . . In the way Politics were the subject of conversation . . . C. said you are well aware Bagulley that Parliament will not grant your petition. I know that said Bagulley, but all the multitude who join us are not to know that secret. Said C. how shall we manage when our petition is rejected we have not an organised body, Bagulley said three fourths of us are already organised for we have been in the Militia in Volunteer Corps and the regular army—said C. where are your arms—answer—Independent of the Depot at Chester there are three places in Manchester where we can procure them and from our brethren in Sheffield we can get any quantity as well as from Birmingham where we have friends in great numbers with whom we are in constant and regular correspondence. C. then said do you mean to follow young Watson's plan and seize the Gun shop. Answer. No. Watson is a fool, and by his precipitate measure has injured the scheme of the Hampden Club. . . . We won't act like him. A great deal of conversation on other affairs took place till C. arrived at New Islington . . . about 9 p.m. . . . In the garrets . . . Mitchell the famous Liverpool orator was holding forth and telling his Auditors of the progress of his Mission through Yorkshire, Staffordshire, and Warwickshire and Shropshire. said everything was going well in these counties and better than he would have conceived Baguley then said a great deal of the enormous revenue of the Prince whom he abused as the most infamous of characters. Other speakers more subtle blamed Bagulley for his openness and said he should be sly and cautious . . . about ½ past ten C. left the meeting . . . and found Mitchell in a private room at the *Plough*. . . . In a short time Molineux, the printer of sedition, Bradbury, Gallimore, Buckley, a chief orator, and the aforesaid Baguley joined them . . . Mitchell inquired . . . how the Finances went on . . . says Baguley they are 30 pounds better. . . .

CHAPTER XIX

AFTERMATH OF HABEAS CORPUS SUSPENSION, 1817–19

From the *Black Dwarf*'s "Records of Persecution", March 4, 1818.

"NATHANIEL HULTON, of New Mills, Derbyshire, was arrested on the 28th of March 1817, sent to London with *seven others*, in HEAVY IRONS; and from thence to Reading Goal, where he remained until the 4th of December; when he was discharged upon his own recognizance. A severe indisposition was one of the consequences of his unjust detention. . . .

"JAMES MANN, of Leeds, was arrested at Dewsbury Bridge, on the 6th of June. One of the cavalry was going to seize Bradley at the same time, but another *in the secret*, told him B. was the '*government evidence*'. After Mann's arrest he was put into the House of Correction at Wakefield. Afterwards, *chained hand and foot* to John Smaller, of Horbury, he was conveyed to London; and after two or three mock examinations, committed to Tothill Fields, and from thence sent to Horsham County Gaol; from which he was released on the 3rd of December last. . . .

"SAMUEL DRUMMOND, of Hunter's-lane, Manchester, was arrested in the act of addressing a public meeting on the 10th of March, by some ruffians in the garb of soldiers. He received *several blows*. . . . He was conducted to the New Bailey. . . . For the first *twenty-eight hours* Mr. Drummond was allowed *four ounces of bread* and *one of cheese*! On the 11th, he was called from his cell and told that every thing was ready for his journey to London. He complained of the ill-treatment he had received; and was replied to, by being chained by the foot, to William Ogden, whom we have before introduced to our readers, as a *very dangerous conspirator, seventy years old, lame and sickly*. Arriving in London, he was committed to the House of Correction, after one or two interviews with the Secretary of State. On the 10th of April he was removed to Dorset gaol; and on the 28th again removed handcuffed to the county gaol, Devon; where he remained until liberated on his own recognizance on the 5th of December last. Mr. Drummond afterwards attended in London, in consequence of his engagement to appear on the first day of Term, and incurred an expense of fifteen pounds for the amusement of those who without cause had imprisoned him for nine months; and who

are now to be indemnified for the most wanton outrages that have ever been committed in England."

The Kendal Chronicle on Lord Lonsdale's Parliamentary influence in 1818.

"It may be useful, on the eve of a general election, to record the state of the Lowther representation in the House of Commons:

Lord Lowther Colonel Lowther	Sons of the Earl of Lonsdale	Members for Westmorland
James Lowther, Esq.	Colonel of Westmorland Militia	for Appleby
John Lowther, Esq.	(Swillington)	for Cumberland
John H. Lowther, Esq. Rt. Hon. T. Wallace	(Swillington)	for Cockermouth
Sir James Graham	(of Kirkstall)	for Carlisle
Hon. Mr. Ward Mr. Long		for Haslemere"

On June 5, 1817, the very day that Committees of Secrecy were nominated in both Houses of Parliament to study Ministers' new "Green Bags" of alarming documents, T. J. Wooler was put on trial for some writing in the *Black Dwarf* of April 2nd. The *Black Dwarf* had, after Cobbett's flight, become the leading organ of the "Radical Reformers" and was destined to remain so until Cobbett's return in 1819.[1] In their desire to silence the new cheap weekly before it had gained firm hold, Ministers were incautious enough to pick upon language from Wooler which, violent though it was, hardly passed the limits of permissible political criticism. One short sample shall be quoted from the indictment:[2]

> Our Ministers have deceived and betrayed us. We have to reproach them with most infamous duplicity, and dreadful treachery—they promised to fight our battles, whilst they fought their own. Whilst they talked of patriotism, they meant blood. They had engaged in a contest against freedom abroad, to sacrifice freedom at home—that Constitution which France never thought of assailing, and which she never wished to injure, had perished ignobly at St. Stephen's.

Wooler, who had undertaken his own defence, made an intrepid reply to the charges, and, though a verdict of Guilty was at first recorded, it transpired almost immediately that three of the Jurors had dissented from the Verdict as returned by the Foreman.[3] This revelation actually came in Court while Wooler was being tried on a second charge—that of having derided the right of petitioning when stating that:

> . . . notwithstanding the repeated proofs which the people had received of the folly of petitioning the House of Commons, where their petitions had been received with neglect, yet they still adhered to it with the strongest affection—the people contended for the right of petitioning; they had it; so had the slaves of the Dey of Algiers.[4]

[1] This, though Cobbett found the means of recommencing the *Register* from America after an intermission of under three months. Cobbett did not, of course, relish being superseded by Wooler or reproved by him for sheltering in America, and there were some sharp exchanges. (Cf. *Black Dwarf*, January 7, 1818.)

[2] *Kendal Chronicle*, June 14, 1817.

[3] Even the *Annual Register*, 1817, Appendix to Chronicle, p. 163, admitted of Wooler's defence: "It cannot be denied that the spirit of it obtained the applauses of a great part of the audience, which the sheriffs found it difficult to repress." Wooler had received some coaching from a sympathetic attorney, Charles Pearson, and owed much also to the intervention, at the critical moment, of Joseph Chitty, one of the most learned men at the Bar.

[4] *Kendal Chronicle*, June 14th. The paper's précis has here been retained.

This time, as might be expected, there was no doubt as to the result, and an immensely popular verdict of Not Guilty was returned. And it would, doubtless, have been wiser for the Crown to have accepted the contention of Wooler and his legal advisers that the finding of the first Jury, when properly reported, had constituted an acquittal. A long legal duel opened, in the course of which Wooler obtained the aid of the City in an attempt to "reform" the dubious way in which London juries, and Special Juries, above all, were named.[1]

Wooler's two trials had taken place on June 5th, and on June 9th there opened the bigger affair of the High Treason Trials which had been decided on for the four persons principally accused of plotting the notorious "insurrection" associated with Spa-Fields. Watson the elder was placed in the dock first, and from the lengthy proceedings against him, not terminated until June 16th, it appeared ever clearer that the most active advocate of violence in the "plot" had been the Government informer and witness, Castles, a man of bad character who had tried particularly hard to ensnare Hunt. As one angry newspaper writer subsequently had it:[2]

> There now appears very little doubt that Castles himself did the whole of the traitorous part of the Spa-fields meetings. He put the flags and the powder into the waggon, and he, there is every reason to believe, put the pikes into Watson's privy. The infamous character of this man must either have been known to the Attorney-General, or it was not; if it was known it reflects much against his humanity, to bring such a wretch into a Court of Justice to swear against a fellow-creature, in a case affecting his life—if it was not known, it equally reflects on his talents. . . .

Watson was, of course, acquitted amidst explosions of public rejoicing, and next day, his fellow-prisoners, Thistlewood, Hooper and Preston had to be released too. It is, perhaps, plain why the *Reports* from the Committees of Secrecy, issued before Watson's trial was over, contained some disarming admissions while maintaining, none the less, the urgent need for the continuation of

[1] Cf. W. H. Wickwar, *The Struggle for the Freedom of the Press, 1819–1832*, pp. 43–5. When the Crown prosecuted in the King's Bench, Special Juries were almost inevitably asked for. And though Wooler, who had been tried at Guildhall, was particularly concerned with City of London Juries, the position at County Assizes seems to have been worse.

[2] *Kendal Chronicle*, June 28th.

Habeas Corpus Suspension. The frankness of these admissions is, perhaps, best conveyed by the following passage from the Lords' *Report*:[1]

> This intelligence must be considered as resting in many of its parts upon the depositions and communications of persons who either are themselves more or less implicated in these criminal transactions, or who have apparently engaged in them, but with the view of obtaining information, and imparting it to the magistrates or to the secretary of state.
>
> The testimony of persons of both these descriptions must always be in some degree questionable; and your committee have seen reason to apprehend that the language and conduct of some of the latter may, in some instances, have had the effect of encouraging those designs, which it was intended they should only be the instruments of detecting.

It was the safer to make such judicious-looking admissions, at this stage, because an actual "rising" had just been reported from the borders of Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire.[2] And the "rebels" had certainly been led to believe, by means to be discussed later, that hundreds of thousands of men in other parts of the country were ready to rise too.

But if the Derbyshire "insurrection" of some forty or fifty half-starved men helped to carry the extension of Habeas Corpus Suspension much more easily than might have been expected, Ministers were promptly ill at ease once more. Much had been made of West Riding "plots" and "traitorous activities", and a considerable number of High Treason arrests had taken place early in June. The *Leeds Mercury*, however, promptly discovered that the man who had done his utmost to press on "traitorous activities" by bringing stimulating reports from London had been promptly released, while his dupes had been hurried to gaols, charged with treason.[3] Soon the country was ringing with the name of Oliver the Spy as a worthy, almost superior in his line of business to Castles, and though few yet suspected that Oliver, with a confederate named Bradley, had stimulated the Derbyshire "insurrection" too, it became steadily more certain that few juries would be found to declare the Yorkshire "plotters" guilty of High Treason. In August, indeed, the Yorkshiremen were acquitted

[1] *Annual Register*, 1817, History, p. 66.

[2] The "rising" took place at Pentridge and there was to have been a march on Nottingham, where thousands were supposed to be awaiting them.

[3] *Leeds Mercury*, June 14th.

and, during the same month, an Irish jury inflicted another blow on Government's credit by acquitting the notorious Roger O'Connor. Even the Derbyshire trials, though producing verdicts of Guilty against all the accused in October and three seemingly merited executions in November, eventually brought profoundly disturbing revelations. Oliver had apparently seen the leader of the Derbyshire "insurrection" the day before it took place, and there had been talk of an army of 286,000 men ready to overthrow the Government, 70,000 of them from London and the remainder from the manufacturing areas.[1] It began, in fact, to seem that much of the content of the "Green Bags" and of the alarmist *Reports* from the Committees of Secrecy must have been supplied, directly or indirectly, by Castles and Oliver, and that it was they who were entitled to the credit of Habeas Corpus Suspension, the Ministers having supplied little but the credulity and the "blood-money".

In December a number of cases came on, in which Ministers might normally have expected convictions. A struggling pamphlet-publisher, named Hone, had issued anti-Ministerial Parodies on the Catechism, Litany and Creed under the style of *John Wilkes's Catechism*, the *Political Litany*, and the *Sinecurist's Creed*. They had caught the "mob's" taste and achieved some sale when a prosecution for exciting "impiety and irreligion" was resolved on. The style of Hone's parodies may be suggested by the following adaptation of the *Lord's Prayer*:[2]

> Our Lord who art in the Treasury, whatsoever be thy name, thy power be prolonged, thy will be done throughout the empire, as it is in each session. Give us our usual sops, and forgive us our occasional absences on divisions; as we promise not to forgive them that divide against thee. Turn us not out of our places; but keep us in the House of Commons, the land of Pensions and Plenty; and deliver us from the People. Amen.

Anything approaching blasphemy was normally calculated to antagonise a Special Jury even more than "sedition" but Hone made such a remarkable and effective defence that, despite the declared opinion of Mr. Justice Abbott, a Special Jury acquitted

[1] *Kendal Chronicle*, November 8th. See Appendix below for Home Office documents which reveal the turpitude of some of the agents on whom the magistrates and Home Office were relying, agents engaged in scientifically preparing their "friends" for the gallows.

[2] *The First Trial of William Hone* (13th edn.), p. 9.

him, on the *Catechism*, after only "very short deliberation".[1] This much-applauded decision was given on December 18th,[2] and next day Lord Chief Justice Ellenborough, a grimmer figure both for Jury and accused than Abbott, arrived to preside over the prosecution proceedings on the *Political Litany*.[3] Ellenborough did his best to stop Hone from defending himself, as he had prepared to do, by displaying how often, in the political contests of the past, Scripture parodies had been used without the slightest intention of creating "impiety and irreligion". Hone refused to be coerced, continued his defence in his own style, after strong exchanges with the Judge, and, on one occasion, reproved Ellenborough with a vigour and success that produced, in defiance of the Court, the loudest applause from the "public".[4] Ellenborough summed up in the strongest way against Hone, and if he had had to deal with the ordinary Special Jury might well have obtained the verdict of Guilty on which he was obviously set.[5] But six of the Special Jurors, who had been summoned, had stayed away, despite the penalties to which they thus exposed themselves, six "Talesmen" had had to be used to fill the vacancies, and after an hour and three-quarters, an immensely popular verdict of Not Guilty was returned. But Ellenborough was not yet done with Hone, and arrived next day, December 20th, to conduct Hone's third trial, that on the *Sinecurist's Creed*. Despite his physical exhaustion, Hone made an eight hours' defence and, for all the renewed efforts of the Attorney-General in prosecuting and Ellenborough in summing up,[6] he induced a Jury of seven Special Jurors and five "Talesmen" to declare him Not Guilty after consulting together for a mere twenty minutes. It was not for nothing that the Crown abandoned the prosecutions of Wooler and Carlile, two further

[1] *Kendal Chronicle*, December 27, 1817.

[2] *Ibid.*: "Great exultation was expressed by a number of respectable individuals at the result of the trial."

[3] *Ibid.*, December 27th, for Hone mentioning at his third trial why his friends had abandoned the thought of employing Counsel. Their general opinion was that "no man was to be had with sufficient courage to withstand my Lord Ellenborough, and that if one dared to do so, he would lose what is called the ear of the Court".

[4] *Ibid.*, for the famous: "It is not you, my Lord, but I who am on my trial." The applause that followed "occasioned great sensation".

[5] *Ibid.*: "His Lordship concluded with a declaration, that according to his conscience, and upon his oath of office, he believed the publication, which the defendant acknowledged, was a most impious and profane libel."

[6] *Ibid.*: "The Attorney-General's speech and Lord Ellenborough's charge, were couched in the strongest terms as to their opinions of the defendant's guilt."

publishers whose trial was to have come on after Hone's.[1] The next Parliamentary Session promised to be difficult enough as it was.

The Session, begun on January 27, 1818, found Ministers able to report some improvement of industry and employment. But despite their implied claim to have contributed to this result by their "vigilance" in regard to "insurrection and treason", Ministers deemed it wise to offer the country immediate repeal of Habeas Corpus Suspension. And after this conciliatory beginning, improved upon when the Finance Committee was reappointed to continue its researches into the possibilities of expenditure-reduction, Ministers asked for the appointment of new Committees of Secrecy to examine another Green Bag of confidential documents, accumulated since the last *Reports* of June 1817. Tierney, now leading Opposition in place of the deceased Ponsonby, jeered at Castlereagh and his Green Bag.[2] He assumed quite correctly that what Ministers were really after was Reports which should justify what they had done and recommend the passage of a Bill of Indemnity for them and the various agents of the law, from magistrates to petty constables, who had had a hand in the hundreds of arrests that had not been followed by convictions.[3] The course of the debates on the *Reports* from the Secrecy Committees and on the Indemnity Bill gave Opposition no majorities but a variety of the most excellent opportunities to attack the credulity and wrong-doing of Administration. On the matter of Ministerial credulity, real or assumed, there was, of course, much denunciation of the attention that has been paid to Castles, Oliver and the "Scottish spy, Richmond", and the facilities that had been given them to ensnare their dupes. And it was not merely through Parliamentary debates that the nation learned of the suffering and loss that had been inflicted on scores of poor families by the arrest of their bread-winners, their long detention without trial, and the

[1] *Kendal Chronicle*, December 27th: "In consequence of the great length of time which Mr. Hone's trials have occupied . . . the trials of Mr. Carlisle and Mr. Wooler [have been postponed] to some future day. . . . Perhaps we may conclude that those trials are altogether abandoned, for those honest juries have taught a most impressive lesson to Ministers. . . . Mr. Carlisle, who has been a prisoner in the King's Bench for some time, for re-publishing the parodies charged as libels against Mr. Hone, was on Saturday liberated on his own recognizance."

[2] *Hansard's Parliamentary Debates*, February 5th.

[3] Without a Bill of Indemnity, there were the most unpleasant prospects of hundreds of actions for "false imprisonment".

crowning injustice, if the Indemnity Bill were passed, of taking from them all real chance of seeking legal reparation from credulous Ministers, "vigilant" Magistrates, violent constables and inhumane gaolers. The prisoners themselves, when released by the abandonment of Habeas Corpus Suspension, made Ministers almost as much trouble outside Parliament as Opposition within. Some attempted scenes in the Court of King's Bench;[1] others related the wrongs and occasional inhumanities they had suffered to large public meetings;[2] three stayed in prison rather than accept any conditions of release;[3] and at least one, ex-Lieutenant Arthur Thistlewood, was rearrested for demanding "satisfaction" from Lord Sidmouth.[4] Ministers' claims to have saved the country and to be entitled to its gratitude certainly began to wear very thin by the time their Indemnity Bill was on the Statute Book. Even Canning, hired by a place in the Cabinet to scoff and jeer at Government's enemies, committed one of the great mistakes of his life when, in search of a cheap laugh from the Ministerial Benches he ridiculed the most aged of Ministers' ex-prisoners, who had nearly died in irons, as "the revered and ruptured Ogden".[5]

[1] Cf. *Champion*, January 25, 1818, under the heading of *Habeas Corpus Suspension*: "John Roberts, John Smith, Francis Ward, John Johnson, James Knight, Samuel Brown, John Baguelly, and several others late of Manchester, Derby, &c., appeared on the floor of the Court [of King's Bench], and claimed to be heard separately.... Roberts—will your Lordship counsel me what I am to do, and where I am to obtain redress for my unjust imprisonment. Lord Ellenborough—I am a Judge, not a Counsel... John Smith of Derby now begged to be heard... Francis Ward read a copy of the recognizance. He insisted that the recognizance ought to be discharged.... Another of the persons on the floor here insisted that it ought to be discharged; he was 130 miles from home, without a penny in his pocket; and if he were to reach home, he might be called upon next week to appear again... Johnson in the name of the whole then informed his Lordship that... they would return to-morrow prepared with affidavits..."

[2] *Ibid.*, February 8 for Baguley: "From the 16th of March to the 10th of April, he did not pull off his clothes, for the irons rendered so necessary a change impossible. Cries of shame, shame, horrible." This was to a great meeting at the Crown and Anchor, on February 2nd, which heard much other complaint.

[3] *Ibid.*, for the following resolutions of a Crown and Anchor meeting of February 2nd, a meeting attended by Westminster's two M.P.s: "That the manly firmness of Mr. Evans, sen., Mr. Evans, jun. [leaders of Spencean Philanthropy arrested soon after Spa-fields] and Mr. Benbow, in refusing any but unconditional liberation, signally enitles them to the warmest approbation.... That in the opinion of this Meeting, the subjecting Mr. Evans and Son, and other Englishmen, to the shameful degradation of being ironed was a gross violation of the laws of the land...."

[4] *Kendal Chronicle*, February 14th.

[5] Indignation will not only be found in the *Black Dwarf* (March 18th, April 8th, April 15th) but in the more moderate *Champion* (March 29th, April 5th, April 12th) and in the still more moderate *Kendal Chronicle* (April 4th).

Though reluctant to turn against Ministers when "insurrection" dangers had been in debate,[1] "Independent members" reconciled conscience and interest by doing so on the most "popular" question that arose after the Easter Recess. The temptation to make a display of "independence" was the greater since the sitting Parliament was late in its sixth year and, in the General Election preparations that were proceeding on all hands, mere "tools of the Ministers" promised to be very unpopular. Many "independents" were critical, in any case, of the over-complaisance that Administration tended to show for the financial demands of the Royal Family, and some very particular instances were in question during April 1818. Owing to the death of the Princess Charlotte of Wales, only child of the Regent, in November 1817, and the childlessness of the Duke of York, the next of the Royal brothers, the marriage of the Duke of Clarence, the Duke of Kent and the Duke of Cambridge had, according to Ministers, become of utility to the State, and even the somewhat dubious marriage of the Duke of Cumberland, already accomplished, was worth rewarding. Helped by the Regent, the Royal Dukes did some hard bargaining before agreeing to surrender their celibate bliss—and Ministers were understood to have agreed to add £19,000 a year to the £21,000 already enjoyed by the Duke of Clarence and to increase the incomes of the Dukes of Kent, Cumberland and Cambridge by £12,000 a year each. Moreover, besides State jointures to be provided for the Royal Dukes' expected wives, "outfit allowances" had been bargained for so that the new households might be set up with becoming "splendour", £22,000, apparently, in the case of the Duke of Clarence and £12,000 each in that of the others.[2]

There was anger among Ministers' own majorities when the terms were broken to them before the business was opened in Parliament on April 13th by the reading of a Message from the Regent. And the fate of the original proposals was sealed when a leading Ministerial member, sitting for a vast and "popular" constituency, rose to make a significant intervention in the tide of

[1] There was great indignation among Reformers (cf. *Black Dwarf*, March 18th) that Wilberforce, though uneasy about the Ministerial use of men like Castles and Oliver, did not exert his influence in support of an Opposition motion, of March 5th, for an inquiry.

[2] *Hansard's Parliamentary Debates*, April 13th, for Opposition versions of the original terms, as broken to leading Ministerial members, assembled at Lord Liverpool's house. Other versions were in the Press.

Opposition oratory. Here, in abbreviated form, is the decisive intervention of the Ministerial member for Yorkshire:[1]

> Lord Lascelles said, as several Honourable gentlemen had alluded to a meeting held at the house of the Minister, he thought it his duty to say, that he, for one, was present at that Meeting, and he did not think he was taking upon himself too much, when he stated in behalf of a great many Gentlemen present at that meeting, that what transpired there did not meet with their satisfaction (loud cheering).

Most Ministerial members, of course, found some excuse for not supporting the Opposition amendment that day,[2] but plain notice had been served on Government that the Royal Dukes would have to lower their demands when specific figures came to be voted.

There followed what must have been two days of painful negotiation for Ministers, and on April 15th Lord Castlereagh rose to announce that the Royal Dukes had consented to take half of what had originally been proposed for them. But when he concluded by moving the grant of an extra £10,000 per annum for the Duke of Clarence, a lengthy debate began in which more and more Ministerial members seemed attracted by the Opposition notion that £6000 per annum extra should suffice and that the money for Clarence and any of his brothers, fortunate enough to be offered a similar sum, might well come from a transfer of income from the Windsor Establishment of their stricken father, and should certainly not be an added charge on an already "overburdened people". The debate became ever more exciting and, finally, despite Canning's implied threat that the Duke of Clarence's match would have to be broken off,[3] the Commons voted for £6000 a year, instead of £10,000, by a majority of 193–184. There was more hurried and humiliating negotiation for Ministers to do behind the scenes, and, on April 16th, Lord Castlereagh had to announce that the Duke of Clarence could not see his way to take the £6000 offered him as a marriage allowance by the

[1] *Champion*, April 19th, p. 241.

[2] *Ibid.*, for its defeat by 144–93 though a "number of members stated that though they approved of the spirit of the amendment, they declined voting for it, on the ground that it was unprecedented".

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 242: "Strangers were excluded for above three quarters of an hour. On our return we found ... Mr. Canning on his legs.... He wished the Committee to go to a division with the impression—that in voting for the reduction of the Grant they would vote to nullify the contract of marriage...."

Commons.[1] The Duke of Kent must partially have shared his brother's views for Ministers next passed to obtaining £6000 per annum for the Duke of Cambridge in face of Opposition objections, based on the fact that, as his father's representative in Hanover, the Duke was already in receipt of great revenues beyond the £18,000 and more he enjoyed from England. But speeches from Brougham and Tierney went too far for most "independents" who voted the Duke of Cambridge his £6000 a year in a division of 177–95 and whose temper secured his prospective Duchess, if widowed, the unopposed grant of a £6000 per annum jointure. It was another thing, however, when it came to the proposed £6000 a year for the unpopular Duke of Cumberland who, in view of undesirable features about his marriage had already been refused a marriage-grant in 1815. In Cumberland's case, Opposition, while persisting in its objections to an extra income for Cumberland, was gallant enough to treat his Duchess, cold-shouldered at Court, as an injured lady, entitled to a jointure, similar to that just provided for a widowed Duchess of Cambridge. This combination of dexterity and gallantry was too much for Ministers who were defeated a second time, in a single week, by 143 votes against 136.[2]

Enough has already been said to show that there were special chances in 1818 for Opposition speakers to achieve distinction and popularity. And, certainly, where even slight and now-forgotten figures like Bennet and Brand could gain some attention, persons of more solid talents had the opportunity of establishing enduring reputations. One Opposition reputation that rose even higher, during the 1818 Session, was that of Sir Samuel Romilly. He had been weightily critical of Habeas Corpus Suspension and the Indemnity Bill, of the Sidmouth Circular and the magistrates, who had been inspired by it, to such abuses of power as ordering newsvendors into irons.[3] But he had gained most from two independent

[1] *Hansard's Parliamentary Debates*, April 15th (Holme Sumner) had revealed some of Clarence's problems in advance. Clarence had debts of over £70,000 and commitments to creditors, which would have swallowed a large part of any Parliamentary grant and yet left him with a wife and a married establishment to support. The Duke of Kent was in a similar position though one not brought about, like Clarence's, by the possession of a family of ten illegitimate children by the now deceased Mrs. Jordan, the actress. The Duke of Kent's *ménages* had been expensive rather than prolific. His marriage grant was applied for and obtained on May 15th.

[2] *Ibid.*, April 16th.

[3] *Ibid.*, May 21st, for Romilly's indignation at what had been done by the Lancashire magistrates.

and non-party crusades that had given him a great opportunity to appeal to the conscience of the whole nation. His long crusade against the bloody barbarities of the Criminal Law was at last beginning to show promise of decisive success while, during the 1818 Session, he had made a memorable revelation of the cruelty of some British slave-owners in the West Indies, and the callousness of others.[1]

Romilly's tragic death was, however, approaching, and it were, perhaps, well to turn to a younger generation of Opposition politicians for portents of the future. Lord Milton and Lord Althorp, scions of great Whig houses, had advanced their reputation;[2] Lord Archibald Hamilton, scion of a great Scottish house, had adopted the cause of Burgh Reform;[3] Lambton of Durham was making an increasing mark;[4] and, most important of all, Brougham had found a great cause to which to harness his remarkable powers. With great energy and determination, Brougham had forced a Bill through the House of Commons by which a body of Charity Commissioners was to be set up with wide powers. He had forced the Bill through the Commons by virtue of the great and damning collection of facts he had obtained as Chairman of a Select Committee which had set on foot a Charity Inquiry much wider, doubtless, than any intended by the average member when Brougham had been granted a Committee on the "Education of the Lower Orders", with himself as Chairman. But Brougham had known how to enlist and organise help; every parish clergyman in the kingdom had been circularised; and from the six to seven thousand replies, first available, there emerged a damning story of vast endowments, bequeathed by the pious of the past six centuries but the income from which had been largely alienated, squandered or even embezzled by careless, self-seeking or positively dishonest Trustees.[5] Even the House of Lords had been shaken, and though the suggested Commissioners' powers were

[1] *Ibid.*, April 22nd, for Romilly's revelation of what had happened on the island of Dominica and the island of Nevis.

[2] Milton was the son of Earl Fitzwilliam and Althorp of Earl Spencer.

[3] *Hansard's Parliamentary Debates*, February 10th for his lead also in condemning conduct by the Lord Advocate in Scotland during 1817.

[4] *Ibid.*, March 9th, for Lambton opening the Opposition to the Indemnity Bill. The staider members of opposition thought he was too extreme on this occasion.

[5] *Ibid.*, May 8th. It was in this speech that Brougham ventured the assertion that if the greatest possible use were made of the existing educational endowments, an income of nearly two millions per annum might be obtainable.

confined to educational endowments and, even then, seriously limited and restricted, Brougham's plan was, in fact, partially admitted to the Statute Book. Brougham's critics freely owned that he had scored a remarkable personal success, and, what was more, that the results of his success might make hundreds of thousands available annually for the education of the poor.[1]

It was the second time that Brougham had made a great national stir, on the eve of a General Election, and once again, as in 1812, he was invited by the "independent interest" of a large constituency to come forward on its behalf. And if he was only just beaten for Liverpool in 1812, his prospects in his native Westmorland might, at first sight, seem to have been particularly bright in 1818 seeing how well the ground had been prepared by many months of "independent" effort to shake Lord Lonsdale's grip from one, at least, of the two Westmorland seats. For several months, for example, the county's local newspaper had devoted a good deal of its space to the "independent" effort,[2] and when the five-day election contest began on June 30th, the backing organised for Brougham may be gauged from the following extract from the local newspaper:[3]

> Mr. Brougham was attended on the Hustings each day, by the following Gentlemen:—J. G. Lambton, M.P. for the County of Durham, John Wharton, Esq., M.P. for Beverley, John C. Curwen Esq., M.P. for Carlisle, Lord Molyneux, Sir F. F. Vane, E. Hornby, Esq., M.P. for Preston, G. Bates Esq., Mr. Langton, Thomas Wybergh, of Clifton Hall Esq., John Wakefield Esq., of Kendal, J. D. B. Dykes Esq., William Crackenthorpe Esq., of Newbiggin Hall, F. Vane Esq., Charles Featherstonhaugh Esq., W. James Esq., of Barrock Lodge, with a number of young Gentlemen, the relatives of those whom we have named.

Nor was this all. The Charity Inquiry had yielded a damning revelation against the Lonsdale interest when it transpired that the probable source of much of the Earl's great coal incomes from the Whitehaven area had been a dubious transfer of St. Bee's School rights, made to a predecessor of the Earl's, in 1742, for a period of

[1] Cf. *Notes by Sir Robert Heron, Bart.*, pp. 91–2: "Brougham displayed very great eloquence in moving for a commission to examine into the abuse of charities—abuses the most extensive and shocking. The two persons agains whom the heaviest charges are brought, are Lord Lonsdale and the Bishop of Lincoln. . . ."

[2] Cf. *Kendal Chronicle* file for 1818. The paper's full name was *The Westmorland Advertiser and Kendal Chronicle.*

[3] *Kendal Chronicle*, July 11th.

867 years.[1] Yet, despite all these advantages, Brougham failed to displace either of Lord Lonsdale's two sons, who returned to Westminster as Westmorland's M.P.s by virtue of the following polling figures: Lord Lowther, 1211: Colonel Lowther, 1157; Brougham, 889. Too many freeholders had apparently decided, often under their parsons' guidance, that, as private citizens and heads of families, they had both more to hope and more to fear from Lord Lonsdale than from the "independent interest". There had been those, too, who considered that Brougham, possessed of no large landed estate or "independent fortune" would be out of place as a county representative, while others doubted whether Brougham's little property would even suffice to give him a bare qualification as a knight of the shire.[2] Brougham, in short, had to buy his way back to Parliament as member for Winchelsea.

The story of Brougham's candidature has been given, in some little detail, to explain why the composition of Parliament was not, despite the extensive agitation that had gone on since 1815, very much altered by the elections of 1818. There had been those, indeed, who had been more undeceived than Brougham. The very patriarch of Parliamentary Reform, Major Cartwright, could get nobody to take his candidature for Westminster seriously,[3] and Wooler, who had been flattered into believing that he might be chosen for "the popular interest" at Coventry or Hull ruefully confessed what ignorance of the true motivation of politics he had thereby shown. As Wooler said:[4]

> I had heard that votes were bought: . . . that the way to the House was through the exchange of conscience, but I had not conceived this was entirely general. I thought the barter disguised, the sale effected in private, and that shame at least would prevent the public

[1] *Ibid.*, October 24th, for a full treatment of evidence as to how property, originally left as endowment for a College at Lowther by one of Lonsdale's predecessors, had been allowed to pass back into the estate.

[2] Cf. *Ibid.*, July 4th, for Brougham at the Appleby hustings declaring of the very man who proposed him: "Mr. Wybergh had heard so much about his poverty, that he actually began to doubt whether he had a qualification; and to satisfy himself he had gone to see . . . it happened that some persons [Mr. Wordsworth], among them, who happened to have risen from the extremest poverty to an influence which he had no reason to expect, had put forth the doctrine, that not only a poor man could not be honest, but that not even the moderate fortune of a country gentleman was sufficient to preserve his independence."

[3] Except the *Black Dwarf*, June 17, 1818, which advocated the election of Burdett and Cartwright.

[4] *Black Dwarf*, June 24, 1818.

avowal of the deeds of darkness between the *worthy Electors*, and the equally worthy *buyers of Electors*.

I was however deceived. The market is quite open—as much so as Smithfield—and *any scoundrel* who can reach the highest price may walk into the *British House of Commons*, and become an *honourable member*, a *guardian of the public purse*, and a *representative of the people*. Money is the *only* requisite; the one thing needful; and without it, not an even an angel of light could enter the honourable house. I shall cease to be astonished at the want of talent that prevails there,—at the paucity of intellect,—at the scarcity of honour,—at the combination of meanness and duplicity.... Having purchased a part, at a price infinitely beyond its value, it is natural that they should endeavour to recompense themselves by selling the whole. They must entertain a most despicable opinion of the wretches they so easily dupe—of the slaves whom they so readily buy.... The few exceptions that exist to the general profligacy of those who possess votes will not redeem the great body from the charge of being the most venal and degraded body of mankind.

Yet, within the limits imposed by the overriding financial considerations so feelingly described by Wooler, changes did take place that told, on the whole, against Government. Waithman, for instance, joined Wood and gave Reform a second City member; "Sir" Robert Wilson, a military *frondeur* of some note, won a victory for "popular principles" at Southwark;[1] and Romilly joined Burdett in the representation of Westminster.[2] Two provincial cities that saw similar victories enacted for "popular principles" were Colchester and Coventry, and much more was, in fact, fated to be heard in the Reform camp of Daniel Whittle Harvey, Colchester's new member, and Edward Ellice, the new member for Coventry.[3] A third member, destined to make an even bigger noise in the Reform camp, was Joseph Hume, elected for the Montrose Burghs, and another Scottish result of importance was the failure of all the plans that had been projected to prevent the

[1] *Champion*, June 21st and 28th. Wilson's hustings addresses were a good deal more fire-brand than those of his colleague and brother–"Reformer", Calvert. Calvert and Wilson were elected, and the former pro-Government member, Barclay, was defeated.

[2] Cochrane had decided to give his services to the Chilean navy and the cause of "Liberty" in South America. He had been disgraced for "swindling".

[3] It had seemed until Ellice appeared on the scene that Coventry would be shared between Peter Moore, who had been, for some time, its Reform member and Butterworth who had been spending money heavily but was believed to be a friend of Government. Ellice, owner of a large mercantile fortune and related by marriage to Earl Grey, seems to have had the means to put his own election and Moore's out of doubt. Ellice remained one of Coventry's members for a long time to come. (Cf. *Black Dwarf*, June 21st.)

return of Lord Archibald Hamilton, spokesman for Scottish Burgh Reform, as member for Lanarkshire.[1] Two Irish results of significance may be mentioned, Croker's failure, with all the influence of Government behind him, to drive Plunket from the representation of Dublin University,[2] and the triumphant return of Christopher Hely Hutchinson as senior member for Cork City.[3]

The orthodox Parliamentary Opposition, under Lord Grey, was doubtless right in considering that the election results were, within the limits of the possible, encouraging and stimulating. The great contest at Westminster, watched all over the country, had been specially heartening, for there, victory had apparently been won on two fronts. The extreme "reformers" whose wild talk and wilder schemes had, it was held, presented Ministers with almost fatal opportunities to destroy liberty, had been given a tremendous lesson in their own Westminster headquarters and yet Court plans had been frustrated at the same time. The "radical reformers" of Westminster certainly made an inept display during the General Election of 1818. Sir Francis Burdett had endeavoured to carry an interesting banker-friend, Hon. Douglas Kinnaird, as his colleague in succession to Lord Cochrane; the septuagenarian Major Cartwright had been nominated by a handful of admirers who, however, quite failed to persuade the voters to take the candidature seriously; and, finally, Henry Hunt had been nominated, too, and constant uproar on the hustings been made certain.[4] It was a tempting prospect for a Court and Government candidate, and there were times when Sir Murray Maxwell, aided

[1] *Crosby's Parliamentary Record*, 1846, gives the voting as 56 for Lord Archibald and 45 for his opponent. See also *Dundee, Perth and Cupar Advertiser*, February 19, 1819, for Lord Archibald's first step in the new Parliament on February 8th.

[2] *Champion*, July 5th, gave considerable space to the election, the only Irish election so honoured. The *Champion*'s tone may be judged from the following Dublin message: "We congratulate the College, and the Country not less than the College, on the triumph of Mr. Plunket. He was last evening . . . declared duly elected, having had a majority of four voices, even though the Provost persevered in refusing the votes of the old Scholars, and thus thinned the ranks of the Independents. . . . Cries were constantly heard of 'Plunket and Freedom,' 'Independence of Trinity College,' . . . 'No Croker;' 'No Corruption' . . . "The constituency was so small that the election was decided by 34 votes given to Plunket as against 30 given to Croker.

[3] *Crosby's Parliamentary Record*, for the voting of 1812, when Hely Hutchinson was successfully ejected, and for that of 1818 when his triumphant return could not be prevented. 1812: Longfield, 918; Colthurst, 669; Hely Hutchinson, 639. 1818: Hely Hutchinson, 1209; Colthurst, 851; Longfield, 716.

[4] *Champion*, June 21st, for the constant hustings storms, provoked by Hunt who was, nevertheless, the hero of part of the voteless "rabble".

by a large subscription, seemed almost certain to share Westminster's representation with Sir Samuel Romilly, whose reputation kept his name at the head of the poll for all the fifteen days of voting.[1] Immense efforts, including the withdrawal of the candidatures of Kinnaird and Cartwright, permitted Burdett's seat to be saved but the danger had been great and the loss of credit by the "extreme" reformers immense.

But Romilly's tragic death, by his own hand, on November 2, 1818, seemed to provide the "radical reformers" with an unexpectedly early opportunity of repairing their fortunes, for no candidate of Romilly's great and general appeal was available for "moderate reform". A great meeting was accordingly summoned for the purpose of deciding upon a single Radical candidate; the claims of Kinnaird, Hunt and Cartwright were abandoned, more or less, by agreement; and the search for a candidate, who could bring success, was entered upon. Hunt suggested Cobbett, still absent in America, and there was another suggestion of Lord John Russell, who, it was claimed, favoured Triennial Parliaments and Household Suffrage. But the bulk of the meeting obviously preferred John Cam Hobhouse, a young and much travelled friend of Byron whose pen had already been enlisted in the cause of "liberty",[2] who had worked hard to save Burdett's seat and who had broken with his father, a baronet, long Chairman of Committees in the House of Commons because of the latter's objections to his son's unorthodox friends.[3]

Hobhouse was known and liked by some of the more "popular" members of the Whig Opposition and it seems that they would have been disposed to allow him the Westminster seat if they could have persuaded him to refrain from following Burdett and his Westminster Committee in abuse of the "cozening" Whigs. But both Burdett and the "Westminster Committee" were rancorous at the defeat that had been inflicted on them in the

[1] *Champion*, for the state of the poll at the end of each of the first three days of the contest. First day: Romilly, 189; Maxwell, 176; Burdett, 87; Kinnaird, 25; Hunt, 14; Cartwright, 10. Second day: Romilly, 1014; Maxwell, 930; Burdett, 435; Kinnaird, 80; Hunt, 44; Cartwright, 28. Third day (some votes for Hunt and Cartwright having apparently been disallowed): Romilly, 1276; Maxwell, 1241; Burdett, 484; Kinnaird, 63; Hunt, 23; Cartwright, 20.

[2] S. A. Allibone's *A Critical Dictionary of English Literature* shows Hobhouse to have published some poems in 1809; in 1812, his *Journey through Albania and other Provinces of Turkey with Lord Byron*; in 1816 a semi-justification of the Hundred Days, *The Last Reign of Napoleon*; and in 1818, *Historical Illustrations of the Fourth Canto of Childe Harold.*

[3] *Black Dwarf*, November 18, 1818, for the great meeting of the previous day.

summer when Romilly had been placed at the head of the poll and Burdett almost defeated. Moreover, having spent twelve assiduous weeks in organising the constituency so thoroughly that all prospect of a successful opposition had apparently vanished the Westminster Radicals decided to pay off old scores in full. The famous tailor-politician, Francis Place, prepared a Report to the Westminster Electors in which they were given a full account of the efforts that had had to be used since 1807 to shake off from Westminster the control of a "corrupt and oligarchical faction", the Whigs.[1] Hobhouse was given a chance to disown Place's attack on the Whigs and Earl Grey, but when he declined to do so, an opposing candidate was produced almost at the last minute, the Hon. George Lamb, youngest son of Lord Melbourne. A tremendous election contest opened and lasted from February 13th to March 3rd, 1819. Lamb seems to have polled not only the Whig votes but those of the Tories, anxious to keep out Burdett's nominee, while, on the other side, Hunt succeeded in producing a rare amount of clamour and division because, as he truly said, Hobhouse was no friend of Universal Suffrage and Annual Parliaments. The final polling figures were Lamb, 4465; Hobhouse, 3861; and Cartwright, 38, and Ministers, who were engaged in the trying work of keeping control of a new and somewhat unfriendlier Parliament, probably benefited from all the turmoil that had raged in the opposing camps of "liberty".[2]

Meanwhile the Session opened in January 1819 had not yet produced a great occasion. The most notable division, in fact, had taken place, on February 22nd, and concerned the source from which an extra £10,000 a year was to be found for the Duke of York as *custos* of his father in place of the Queen, who had died in November. In dividing at 186 against 281 for a solution that would have taken the £10,000 from the Privy Purse instead of the taxpayer, Tierney seemed to have done promisingly enough to raise hopes in Opposition. It was certainly a considerable improvement on the division of 168 against 277 which Tierney

[1] Graham Wallas, *Life of Francis Place*, pp. 132–40.

[2] Cf. *New Monthly Magazine*, March 1, 1819, for one view of the contest: "The political character of the man whom Sir Francis has thought fit to patronise, cannot be mistaken, because he has himself made it public in a work of two octavo volumes. The object of this book is to hold forth Buonaparte as the hero of his age, and as the victim of a coalition of tyrants. For accomplishing this purpose the writer has been compelled to vilify and degrade his own country."

had obtained, on February 2nd, when he had expressed disquiet at Ministers' resolve to continue the régime of inconvertible paper money for yet another year. A substantial victory for Opposition came, at length, on May 6th, when Lord Archibald Hamilton raised 149 votes against 144 on the grievances of the Scottish Burghs, denied reform of their antiquated and oppressive municipalities because Government supporters feared that representative Town Councils might choose very different members of Parliament from those hitherto sent from the Scottish Burghs. Opposition was apparently encouraged to undertake some sparring against the Army Estimates on May 7th and 10th, and, on both days, Joseph Hume was in action on a field in which he was soon to become Opposition's principal expert.[1] On May 13th came another subject with prospects for Opposition, the introduction of Ministers' unpopular Foreign Enlistment Bill, designed, in effect, to prevent Britons from enlisting in the cause of Spanish-American "liberty" and against the execrated "tyranny" of Ferdinand VII of Spain.

The time seemed to have come for Tierney to issue a direct challenge to the Ministers, and the fact that trade and industry had once again fallen into deep depression after some temporary recovery in 1818 gave Tierney additional matter to use against Ministers in his motion of May 18th on the State of the Nation. Tierney would possibly have done better not to taunt Castlereagh on the Congress of European sovereigns, which he had attended at Aix-la-Chapelle some months before, for Castlereagh was inspired to what was, for him, almost eloquence in his defence of the methods and results of Government's Continental policy.[2] And Tierney might have done better if he had waited for the surprisingly close division on the Second Reading of the Foreign

[1] *Hansard's Parliamentary Debates*, May 7th, for Hume suggesting economies at the Military College and the Military Asylum. On May 10th Hume pointed to the staff estimate of £21,104 in respect of Ceylon, Mauritius, the Cape, Malta and the Ionian Islands though there were considerable local revenues in each case.

[2] *New Monthly Magazine*, June 1819, ventured to say: "The speech of Lord Castlereagh delivered upon this occasion, was among the finest ever delivered before the House." The *Annual Register* has this convenient short summary of the foreign part of Castlereagh's speech: "He could not sit quietly by and listen to the taunts of the right honourable gentleman on that coalition of great nations which had taken place. The principles which now bound those sovereigns in strict alliance, were not those of ambition nor aggression; they were not united for the violation of public freedom, nor to oppress and overlay the liberties of nations, but to preserve to their subjects the fruits of their arduous struggles for the independence of this as well as other powers."

Enlistment Bill[1] or for the Chancellor of the Exchequer's announcement, on June 9th, that there would have to be three millions of new taxes annually. As it was, Tierney's motion, of May 18th, was held to have obtained only the votes of professed Oppositionists and to have induced all the "independents" to support Ministers. And the resulting division of 178 against 357, producing, as was triumphantly claimed for Government, "a majority of above *two* to *one*—in the fullest house ever known in the annals of Parliament" ended Opposition's best hopes for the Session.[2] But by the time Parliament was prorogued on July 13th, the "Jacobins" or Radicals, as they were now beginning to be called, were again astir outside Parliament.

APPENDIX

Agents Provocateurs ensnare "Jerry" Brandreth, June 1817.

[From the Home Office Papers on the Midland "Insurrection", H.O. 40.6].

Informer to H. Enfield Esq., June 1, 1817. [Enfield was Nottingham's Town Clerk.]

I came to Nottingham and went to Jerry Brandreth's between 6 and 7 this evening. He was at home. I told him what I had done since last Sunday.... We left his House to go to Stephens' House and met him against the gaol. We walked up Sandy Lane ... Stevens said I should have been here on Monday night.... He stated that there was a London Delegate [*Oliver the Spy*], who reported that there was about 70,000 in London ready to act with us; and that they were very ripe in Birmingham. His name was mentioned but I did not distinctly understand it. It was not stated where he lived, but that he was a staunch Friend, and that he had been here three Times, and at Birmingham, Sheffield and other places, and was to be at Birmingham tomorrow night, and to be here again on Wednesday or Thurdsay, and to bring

[1] *Hansard's Parliamentary Debates*, June 3rd. The division was 155–142.

[2] Cf. *Notes by Sir Robert Heron, Bart.*, under June 1819: "The new Parliament acquired some esteem from the people. Ministers had more than once been defeated. A large floating party alarmed those in power, and appeared undecided both as to measures and men. In an evil hour, Tierney brought forward a motion on the state of the nation. The question might have rested firmly on its own grounds, but he, unfortunately, argued it on the grounds of party feeling, and a desire to obtain possession of office. Nothing ever appeared to me so imprudent, nothing ever was less successful. The floating party ... being driven to a premature decision, they joined the government, and, contrary to the expectations of both sides, gave them a triumphant majority. The joy of Ministers was not concealed; they instantly took advantage of their victory, no longer attempted to diminish the odium of their measures, and added taxes to the amount of three millions to the burdens of an oppressed people."

the Determination of the Time to be fixed upon for the Insurrection, and the manner of proceeding.... Nothing was said who was to head them, or what Funds or Arms they have but that a Plan of Telegraphic Information is to be adopted to inform the Country ... and Signs and Countersigns are to be used.... They did not say how the London Delegate was supported, but stated that he dressed like a Gentleman.... I and Jerry went to Rollett's and were in Company there a considerable Time with Samuel Haynes and John Mann.... They told me that Haynes, Sam Slater and Jerry had been to-day to look at the Barracks....

Nottingham, June 6th, H. Enfield communicates Informer's Report dated June 5th:

I saw Jerry at his own House.... I asked him the name of the London Delegate he said he was known well. I asked him if they had any Communication with any other person than the London Delegate—he said they had not but some of the chaps had. I asked him if they had any trusty Friends at Birmingham. He said, O Yes.... This morning about eleven, I was again with Jerry. He told me he was going to Pentridge for good, to command the men who were to rise there ... and that he was to bring them here [Nottingham] ... and to collect from all the Towns they came through. This afternoon his wife told me he was gone not to return back till Saturday if then. She thought he would not return till the job Began, and that there would be a meeting to-night at his house though he was gone.

Informer to H. Enfield Esq., June 6, 1817 [Apparently in Sidmouth's hands by June 8th].

I saw Joshua Marshall, William Traswell, George Smith, William Lomas of Bulwell to-day separately and asked them, if they were in readiness for the Job.... I went to Arnold, and saw Charles Smith and began to talk with him about the Job and asked him if he had got anybody ready.... He said all the Town was ready if there was a probability of succeeding, but he did not think there was a chance—He said, there could be nothing done unless they were properly organised and had a good leader and he advised me to keep clear from the hands of Justice, as the intended attempt would only get many hanged and I should be considered a leader and they would be sure to hang me.... Stevens told me that a Delegate from Derby was then at Rollett's.... I went with Stevens....

Nottingham, June 9. H. Enfield communicates the magistrates' readiness to pounce:

My confidential clerk is on the look-out near Pentridge, watching the result of old Bacon's threatened movements—No report last night—We sat in council waiting for it through the first part of the night.

"Was this a Christian country? Was this land . . . of liberty? He hoped that the House would still prove that it was so by instituting enquiry [into Peterloo]. . . . The Magistrates having committed all these outrages, afterwards assembled together to ascertain what crimes had been committed. After this dreadful example, Ministers imagined they had terrified the people from proceeding further on the business of Reform; but a meeting took place in Westminster, quite as large as the Manchester one, at which he had the honour of presiding in order to subscribe for the relief of the Manchester sufferers, and with the money raised 600 persons had been relieved, among whom were seven police constables, one man suspected of being a spy, and 120 women. . . . He hardly knew a circumstance in history more calamitous, and more to be deplored than the fatal 16th of August, at Manchester, a day that would never be forgotten in the history of this country. He had a right to charge Ministers with the whole of the burden of the accusation, and passing by Magistrates and Constables, to demand of them an enquiry into the transactions of that day. It was a remarkable circumstance that the number killed that day was double the number killed in the Victory of Sir J. Jervis—the return of killed and wounded on that honourable day [battle of Cape St. Vincent] did not exceed three or four hundred. At Manchester the number of victims, men, women and children, was upwards of six hundred."

Sir Francis Burdett, May 15, 1821, continues to demand an inquiry into Peterloo.

"We will show our countrymen what the Faction is by which we are agitated and disturbed—we will give them TRUTH while we expose falsehood.

"Scurrility and invective, treason and blasphemy are the weapons which have for a length of time been wielded against our most sacred institutions. The retainers who are employed to fight the fight are far below our mark—the leaders, the plotters, the hidden directors of this despoiling warfare, are our game; we will put them up; and, please God! knock them over afterwards.

"In the pursuit of this object, melancholy as is the truth, true it is that the Queen first presents herself to our notice. She is as much the leader of the Radicals as Hunt was before her. He

had his procession and subscription; she has had hers. Mr. Hobhouse praised Hunt—Mr. Hobhouse praises the Queen; Major General Wilson served under Hunt;—he is equally devoted to the Queen; Little Waddington was the harbinger of Hunt—Little Waddington marched before the Queen . . . in short, the object, the votaries, and the measures are the same; and the personage who claims to be recognised as Queen Consort of these realms, has accepted an office vacant by the imprisonment of her predecessor [Hunt] in Ilchester Gaol.

"These spouting, mouthing, blind devotees to disorder and riot, care as little for the Queen as they did for Hunt. She serves as the pole to hoist the revolutionary Cap of Liberty on. Burdett was the pole at one time; Wardle at another; that wretched animal Paul at a third; Hunt was the last pole before the Queen; and now her Majesty is established the *veritable* Mother Red-Cap of the faction."

John Bull in its second number, December 24, 1820.

DURING the spring and summer of 1819, the distress of the industrial districts was again reaching alarming proportions. One periodical, very favourable to Government, was compelled, for example, to report the following from Monmouthshire:[1]

A meeting of the coal merchants of Newport, and the proprietors of collieries in its neighbourhood . . . was held at Newport; when distressing statements of the present situation of the trade were made, and a universal conviction prevailed of the absolute necessity of speedy relief. Great numbers of workmen have been discharged from the collieries within a short space of time, and others have suspended their workings.

Of Leeds it was said that "the distress is so great that it is under consideration to afford from the parish funds means for conveying some hundreds of the cloth-manufacturers and their families to the Cape of Good Hope or Canada". And from the Black Country the following report came:

The trade of Wolverhampton is in a most miserable state. The order of things there is completely inverted. Now, the last resource of a starving journeyman is to set up master; his employer cannot find him work, on which there is any possible profit, and is therefore obliged to discharge him; the poor wretch then sells his bed, and buys an anvil, procures a little iron, and having manufactured a few articles, hawks them about . . . for what he can get. . . . He might have previously received 10*s*. a week as a servant; but now he is lucky if he gets 7*s*. as a master manufacturer.

This growing distress had quickly had its repercussions on popular politics, and, by June, Reform meetings were once again becoming the order of the day.[2] It was on July 12th, the day before the prorogation of Parliament, that Birmingham held a meeting which Ministers considered to have set a most dangerous example. At that meeting Birmingham presumed to act as though it were a Parliamentary borough and elected Sir Charles Wolseley, a sympathetic baronet, not indeed member of parliament but

[1] *New Monthly Magazine*, July 1st, for all three descriptions of distressed districts.

[2] Samuel Bamford's *Radical*, Chapter 30: "Amongst the meetings for reform held in the early part of the summer of 1819, were the one which took place on Spafields London, at which Mr. Hunt was chairman; and another held at Birmingham, at which Major Cartwright and Sir Charles Wolsely were elected to act as legislatorial attornies for that town, in parliament."

legislatorial attorney for Birmingham in Parliament. He was elected for a period of one year, "if so long he executed his trust faithfully", and he was charged to present himself at the Bar of the House of Commons, and to claim admission. Hunt obviously took some hints from Birmingham when, on July 21st, he led the proceedings at a vast Smithfield meeting in London, for the existing House of Commons was declared not to be justly constituted, binding force was denied to its enactments after January 1, 1820, and, meanwhile, voters' books were to be compiled on the basis of Universal Suffrage so that the people might be prepared to vote when summoned to do so according to the plan for which they were petitioning the Regent. And, on July 28th, a violent Stockport meeting was held under the chairmanship of Birmingham's new "legislatorial attorney" which declared Lord Sidmouth to have committed high treason. The language used, on this occasion, by Wolseley himself and by the other principal orator, a preacher named Harrison, was certainly strong, Wolseley announced:[1]

> He was a most determined friend of the people, and should remain so while there was a drop of blood in his heart . . . He was proud to say that he had been at the taking of the Bastille in France, and would be happy to be at the taking of a Bastille in England. Were all hearts but as firm in the cause as his own, they would soon put an end to the present tyranny and corruption. They should be firm and united, for in a few weeks the struggle would be made and ended.

And, according to Harrison:

> The House of Commons were the people's servants. It was as absurd to petition them as it would be for a master to petition his groom for his horse. . . . There was a barrier between the throne and the people which must be removed either by force from heaven or hell, in order that they might see whether a man or a pig was upon the throne. . . . The united will of the people was sure to prevail. It was an axiom that could not be confuted.

Government's first reply to the wave of Radical meetings was in the Royal proclamation of July 30th which charged magistrates to use their best endeavour to bring to justice all persons "who had been or may be guilty of uttering seditious speeches and harangues". But Radical meetings continued busily, and special preparations were toward in Manchester and South Lancashire for

[1] Henry Jephson, *The Platform*, i, 476.

a gathering that should impress the whole country. Banners were being prepared bearing the device of *Suffrage Universal, Parliaments Annual*; Caps of Liberty were being embroidered by "female reformers"; and township contingents were marching and drilling in order, as they claimed, to enter Manchester in perfect discipline. The Manchester magistrates were well aware of these activities, as their communications to the Home Office show; and they seem to have been convinced that much of the drilling was intended to prepare for a revolution.[1] A first success they had when, aided by the definite declaration of the Royal proclamation, they forbade an intended meeting of August 9th because a principal purpose was to be the "illegal" one of making choice of a "legislatorial attorney" for Manchester. When the Reformers altered their plans and announced a meeting for August 16th, less open to obvious objections, the Manchester magistrates could find no ground for declaring the meeting illegal in advance. But they called for and obtained the support of a large body of Regular troops and, in addition, a considerable number of Cheshire Yeomanry and a few dozen Manchester Yeomanry were available on August 16th.

The multitude that gathered that day at St. Peter's Fields was immense but Hunt, the principal speaker, had scarce begun his oration when the Manchester Yeomanry, mounted and sabres in hand, began forcing a way through the dense crowd. The magistrates had apparently just decided to issue warrants for the arrest of Hunt and others on the platform, and the execution of the warrants was, with a double portion of unwisdom, entrusted to those volunteer cavalrymen who, apart from being bitterly prejudiced against the objects of the meeting, were so imperfectly disciplined that they were soon striking at the mob with the cutting edge of their sabres. The result was a panic in the crowd, and a very large number of casualties, some of them fatal.[2] Yet

[1] Cf. *Papers relative to the internal State of the Country* as presented to Parliament in November for J. Norris, the resident Manchester magistrate, writing thus to Lord Sidmouth on August 5th: "Herewith I transmit your Lordship two Hand-bills published here by which you will find that the meeting for Monday is put off. This I believe will be a great disappointment to the neighbouring towns, which have provided numbers of Flags and Caps of Liberty.... The drilling parties increase *very extensively*, and unless some mode be devised of putting this system down, it promises to become a most formidable engine of rebellion."

[2] Cf. *Annual Register*, 1819, History, p. 107, for an estimate of the injured as numbering "between three and four hundred". The number of dead has always been in dispute. The *Annual Register* prudently confined itself to the

the united magistracies of Lancashire and Cheshire thought fit to praise "the extreme forbearance exercised by the yeomanry when insulted and defied by the rioters"; Lord Sidmouth sent, "with great satisfaction", the Regent's "high approbation" of the military; and Coroners and Coroners' juries arranged proceedings and verdicts on the victims which dissipated all hope of bringing even the most delinquent Yeomanryman to justice.[1]

Despite official misrepresentations, the scandalous truth about "Peterloo" was soon known throughout the land, *The Times*, for example, publishing a remarkably objective eye-witness account on August 19th which was by no means charitable to the Manchester Yeomanry.[2] On August 19th, too, occurred the first of the indignation meetings at Huddersfield when 3000 people listened to a Manchester orator's account of what had happened in his town and were reported to have vowed vengeance. On August 21st took place the first London indignation meeting at the Crown and Anchor Tavern; on August 22nd Sir Francis Burdett vented his wrath to his constituents in a letter, later the subject of criminal proceedings; and, on September 2nd, there was a great meeting in Palace Yard, Westminster. But everything in point of numbers was outdone by the tremendous crowds that gathered, on September 13th, to give Hunt a royal welcome to London, *The Times* estimating the numbers through which he passed or by whom he was accompanied at 300,000, exclusive of spectators in the houses.[3] Meanwhile the Common Council of London had, by a majority of 71 against 45, demanded an inquiry into "Peterloo"

following: "Numbers were trampled under the feet of men and horses; many, both men and women, were cut down by sabres; several, and a peace officer and a female in the number, slain on the spot."

[1] Cf. *Annual Register*, 1819; "Coroners' inquests were held on the bodies of those who lost their lives by the furious assault of the cavalry; but the verdicts of the juries were such as could lead to no judicial proceedings. Some were 'accidental death'; another, on a child, 'died by a fall from his mother's arms'; a third, 'died by the pressure of the military being under the civil power'."

[2] *The Times*, August 19th, notices, for example, that the Yeomanry "drew their swords and brandished them fiercely in the air" before anything had happened in the crowd which could justify such steps. And as to the misrepresentations, already circulating, *The Times* said that "not a brickbat was thrown at them, not a pistol was fired" while the Yeomanry were forcing their way to the hustings. The crowd gave way to them, and brickbats were only thrown when the Yeomanry had begun "cutting most indiscriminately to the right and to the left" in order to get at the flags that had been brought to the meeting. And after the brickbat throwing, said *The Times*, "from that moment the Manchester Yeomanry cavalry lost all command of temper".

[3] *Ibid.*, September 14th. The reception given to Hunt was, apparently, the greatest ever known.

and the punishment of the guilty, and this demand, taken to the Throne, on September 17th, and awarded an unyielding reply, pushed matters on a stage farther. Not only did indignation meetings continue, taking on a particularly impressive aspect when, as at Birmingham and in Yorkshire,[1] every banner was edged with crape and every spectator carried a mark of mourning, but Opposition noblemen and country gentlemen determined to call for county meetings. On October 13th the County of Cumberland expressed its dislike of what had been done at Manchester and, next day, took place the County of York's meeting, duly convened by the High Sheriff on the requisition of a list of people which included the Duke of Norfolk and Earl Fitzwilliam. The resolutions, moved at York by the Duke of Norfolk, were moderate when compared with some. They asserted:[2]

> That it is the undoubted right of the people to hold meetings for the purpose of considering any matters of public interest; that it is a direct violation of the law, and an alarming invasion of the rights of the people to disperse by violence and military force a meeting legally assembled and peaceably held for such purpose; that they had learnt with unfeigned concern that a meeting at Manchester was suddenly attacked and dispersed by military force; that they had seen with surprise and regret that the Regent had been advised by his Ministers to give his royal approbation to the interference of the military; and they prayed that Parliament might be at once assembled and these matters inquired into.

Government's reply to these resolutions was the dismissal of Earl Fitzwilliam from the Lord-Lieutenancy of the West Riding, a step more calculated to provoke than to discourage the organisation of many further protest meetings during the ensuing weeks. And at meetings like that at Huddersfield, on November 8th, with its three bands, forty-four banners and seven caps of liberty, or that at Habergham Eves, near Burnley, on November 15th, where multitudes were reported, on the alarm of "soldiers" being raised,

[1] The *Dundee, Perth and Cupar Advertiser*, October 15, 1819, estimated the Halifax meeting of October 4th to have been attended by fifty thousand. "Great also was the display of lugubrious trappings," it reported, "both by the male and female Reformers, for the victims who were sacrificed on the plain of Petersfield." The greater part of the news-columns of this number were filled with this kind of intelligence or exciting news of inquest revelations from Manchester on one of the Peterloo victims who had since succumbed to his injuries. There was already evidence against a considerable number of named Yeomanry.

[2] H. Jephson, *The Platform*, i, 494–5, quotes the resolutions in this convenient form.

to have prepared for armed resistance by methodically screwing pike-heads into their staves, there were words and actions of a character that lent themselves to the alarmism which Ministers were now suspected of trying deliberately to create.[1] Parliament, indeed, had been called for November 23rd in the full intention of laying before it a series of documents so disturbing that Ministers, instead of having to submit to "Peterloo" attacks, would be able to pass to the counter-offensive with the demand for a repressive programme, large enough to prevent armed rebellion.

It was one part of Ministers' case for Parliament that the laws against blasphemous and seditious libel needed strengthening, and here they enjoyed, outside Parliament, a stimulating preliminary success. Since the failure of the Wooler and Hone prosecutions of 1817 Ministers could claim to have been so effectually handicapped, in regard to the illegalities of the Press, that they had been compelled to look on while blasphemy and sedition ran riot. On October 12th, however, Richard Carlile, republisher of Paine's *Age of Reason*, was brought to trial in circumstances that promised Ministers a verdict which would once again frighten Radical "scribblers" and newsvendors, both in England and Scotland, out of the field. The career and purpose of Paine had now been vilified and blackened, for most people, beyond recognition; and, in any case, Carlile's defence lacked the method and pungency which had enabled Wooler and Hone, in somewhat more favourable circumstances, to defeat the Attorney-General. After a trial of three days the jury found Carlile guilty within half an hour, and, on a second prosecution for republishing a piece of American "blasphemy", Palmer's *Principles of Nature*, the jury found him guilty in two minutes, and without leaving the box.[2]

The sentences inflicted on Carlile, on November 16th, were severe: two years imprisonment and a fine of £1000 for the publication of Paine; a year's imprisonment and a fine of £500 for the

[1] Cf. *Notes by Sir Robert Heron, Bart.*, under October 1819: "Lord Sidmouth has issued circular letters, for the purpose of creating, as far as his folly and imbecility can effect it, a false alarm. Orders to secure cannon, and to take every other precaution against a powerful enemy—and what is this enemy?—a few men driven to desperation by famine; perhaps a few others with bad designs; the whole *totally* without arms, ammunition, leaders, or money. It is melancholy to reflect how many are the dupes of all this system of hypocrisy and falsehood. In my own county [Lincolnshire] and Northamptonshire we dare not call a meeting: such are the fears of some, and the apathy of others, that even defeat might be incurred. . . ."

[2] *Annual Register*, 1819, Appendix to Chronicle, p. 264.

publication of Palmer; and, finally, further imprisonment until the fines were paid and security given for Carlile's good behaviour for the rest of his natural life.[1] It was the first move in a campaign of prosecution and punishment, which went far enough, in 1820, to lead to the imprisonment of Wroe of the *Manchester Observer*, Wooler of the *Black Dwarf*, Edmonds of *Edmonds' (Birmingham) Weekly Register*, Lewis of the (Coventry) *Recorder*, a considerable number of apprentices, employees and newsvendors, and even the two Radical baronets themselves, Sir Francis Burdett and Sir Charles Wolseley.[2] In the end, of course, such a campaign makes sufficient victims and arouses sufficient sympathy for them to defeat its own purposes. Cobbett, for example, who returned from America in November 1819, devoted his opening efforts to a determined attempt to convince Britons, and especially poor Britons, that Tom Paine had been their greatest friend.[3] Yet, in its first stages, Government's campaign against "blasphemy" was undoubtedly felt to have been effective enough for Tierney, in his opening speech for Opposition when the next Session began, to think it wise to express measureless "disgust and abhorrence" of blasphemy and complete confidence in the essential piety of the British nation.[4]

Meanwhile Ministers had arranged to gather Parliament on November 23rd and to ask for a programme of coercive legislation, the famous "Six Acts". On this occasion they asked for no Committee of Secrecy to examine a Green Bag of confidential documents, perhaps, because such devices had led to much mingled derision and suspicion in the past. This time they put their budget of alarmist communications from Lord-Lieutenants, County Magistrates and City Mayors before the entire body of both Houses on November 24th.[5] Meanwhile Grey in the Lords

[1] *Ibid.* The securities demanded were Carlile's own for £1000 and that of two other persons for £100 each.

[2] Cf. W. H. Wickwar, *The Struggle for the Freedom of the Press, 1819–1832*, pp. 90–128, for something like a full list of the victims.

[3] Huish's *Memoirs of William Cobbett*, ii, 285–90, for Cobbett's opening speeches, at Liverpool and London, in praise of Paine as "the greatest enlightener of the human mind that ever lived". Cobbett had brought Paine's bones with him from America and made great efforts to organise a solemn burial and the erection of a statue.

[4] Cf. *Hansard's Parliamentary Debates*, November 23rd (Tierney).

[5] *Edinburgh Review*, January 1820, in an article on "The Recent Alarms" exposed the tendentious and exaggerated nature of much of this "information" contained in the *Papers laid before Parliament*. Place's summaries and comments in his manuscript "History of the Savage Parliament opened on

and Tierney in the Commons had already indicated Opposition's view. They did not attempt to deny that the situation was serious. But, according to them, the situation was serious largely because Ministers had done very little to meet the legitimate grievances of a suffering people. Inquiry was refused into "Peterloo" and, instead, Magistrates and Yeomanry were thanked and Lord Fitzwilliam was dismissed; distress remained intense, and yet Government's promised economy had been confined so much to words that three millions of new taxes had had to be imposed in the summer, which were now aggravating every sore point in industry and society. Moreover, Ministers had already undertaken a large Army increase in a fashion not only dubiously constitutional and calling for large additional expenditure but showing, also, that they had no desire or intention to proceed by conciliation of the people but by coercion.

It was a strong enough case to disturb Ministers despite the support lent them, on this issue, by the Grenvilles, a support which enabled them, on November 23rd, to defeat Grey in the Lords by 159 votes against 34. The position in the Commons was not nearly so decisively affected by the renewed split in Opposition between the Grenvilles, represented by Plunket, and the rest. That was, perhaps, why Lord Castlereagh decided to bring some extra material forward in justification of the Manchester Magistrates who, according to him, had, at first, put their warrants into the hands of constables for execution and had only resorted to the military when the constables declared their inability to execute the warrants. According to Lord Castlereagh, moreover, the military had not been employed until after the Riot Act had been read from the windows of the House where the Magistrates were assembled and another Magistrate sent to read the Act to the crowd. In speaking of this Magistrate as having been trampled under-foot and expressing his belief that yet a third had been sent to read the Riot Act from the hustings, Castlereagh went even farther beyond the facts.[1]

Tuesday, November 23, 1819" (in Add. MSS. 36628) are worth some attention as he had already been practising the writing of some of the Parliamentary history of 1817 and 1818 (in Add. MSS. 36627).

[1] Cf. *The Times*, March 30, 1820, for a comparison of what Castlereagh had claimed and what the Crown had, at last, produced on the occasion of the trial of Hunt and other principals. *The Times*, whose own reputation was at stake in view of its straightforward "Peterloo" reporting, commented thus: "It is now perfectly clear that everything which was stated in the House of Commons respecting the riotous character of the Manchester meeting by Lord Castlereagh,

The first of the "Six Acts" to make its appearance in Parliament was the Act to prevent delay in the administration of justice in cases of misdemeanour. This was introduced by the Chancellor into the Lords on November 29th and was justified as a legal reform which would prevent defendants from using ancient forms for delaying and obstructing the course of justice. In the category of offences libel ranked as a misdemeanour, and there was no doubt but that defendants in libel actions had enforced delay after delay, a standard case being Cobbett's who, for an alleged libel written on July 1, 1809 had escaped judgement until June 15, 1810 and sentence until July 9, 1810.[1] Opposition immediately pointed out the injustice of curtailing a defendant's legal rights while the Attorney-General was left free, once he had filed an information, to leave a charge hanging over a writer's head for life.[2] By acknowledging that Opposition had a case and offering an additional clause that gave the defendant the chance of forcing the Attorney-General, after a year, to act or to desist from his charge, Ministers got their Act through both Houses without a real struggle.[3]

The case was different with regard to the other five Bills that were laid before both Houses on November 29th. One enactment was intended to forbid all unauthorised military training and evolutions; another gave magistrates special powers to seize arms in "disturbed" counties; a third was meant to prevent "seditious" meetings; a fourth aimed at the more effectual prevention and punishment of blasphemous and seditious libel; and a fifth spelt death to the whole tribe of cheap Radical weeklies by making them liable to the heavy newspaper duty. Well might Grey express dismay and Tierney indignant astonishment. In one of the best speeches of his career, Tierney attacked Ministers as follows:[4]

the Solicitor-General, and other honourable members was totally and absolutely false: it was directly opposed to truth; it does not appear to have even had verisimilitude, or probability in its favour. . . . If the future student take up Parliamentary history, he will find in the speeches of Ministers readings of Riot Acts—magistrates trampled on—Yeomanry assaulted, hooted, unhorsed—waggon loads of stones—forests of bludgeons—not one tittle of which has any existence or place in the State trial. . . ."

[1] Rev. J. S. Watson, *Biographies of Wilkes and Cobbett*, pp. 274–7. Cobbett's case was far from being the record, for Horne Tooke, in the case of a libel written in June 1775, managed to delay sentence until November 24, 1777.

[2] *Hansard's Parliamentary Debates*, November 29th (Lords) (Lord Holland).

[3] *Ibid.*, December 13th, for Lord Holland's thanking Ministers.

[4] Cf. *Annual Register*, 1819, History, p. 131, for this version.

I see on the part of the government an evident determination to resort to nothing but force; they think of nothing else, they dream of nothing else; they will try no means of conciliation, they will make no attempt to pacify and reconcile: force—force—force, and nothing but force! that is their cry, and it has been the same for years; One measure of coercion has been, and will be followed up by another, and the result will justify what I assert that 10,000 [additional troops] will not answer their purpose.... The people will never rest until they are allowed to live under laws equally administered; until their honest industry will procure them the means of maintaining their families, and until they shall again enjoy the blessings of that constitution which their ancestors intended they should partake.... If the noble lord [Castlereagh] had confined himself to the grant of 10,000 men, I should have deemed it a strong measure in a time of profound peace. Is any evidence offered that a body of the military has been overpowered, or even that it has not always been sufficient for the dispersion of any meeting? But if the country gives him more troops to put down new meetings, surely it is somewhat hard that he should also ask it for new laws, that are to prevent the possibility of new meetings.... My sincere belief is, that he will want many more than 10,000 men, and what a melancholy prospect does this hold out to the country.

Decisive divisions took place next day, not on Ministers' programme directly, but on Opposition motions, in both Houses, asking for inquiry into the real state of the manufacturing districts. In the circumstances Opposition must be held to have divided respectably at 150–323 in the Commons and 47–178 in the Lords.[1] Thereafter the most that could be hoped for was the extraction of concessions by the moving of amendments. Amendments were certainly moved in some number. Even the Bill to prevent unauthorised drilling had some objections of detail raised to the scale of its punishments,[2] and, as regards the Arms Bill, Opposition, asserting the "armed freeman" to be the traditional basis of national defence and national liberty, endeavoured to reduce the scope of Government's plans. Thus, it was moved that a warrant to search for concealed arms, whose purpose was suspected, should be signed by at least two Magistrates instead of by one; that no search should be authorised by night; and that deletions should be made from the list of seventeen counties and cities declared by the Bill to be "disturbed" and subject therefore to the

[1] *Hansard's Parliamentary Debates*, November 30th.

[2] *Ibid.* (Lords), December 2nd, for Lord Holland pointing to the seven years' transportation to which a driller was liable though an instructor was only liable to two years' imprisonment.

Act.[1] There was strong criticism, too, of the Bill which proposed to make all the cheap publications liable to newspaper stamp duty though the particular clauses mainly called in question were those intended to force the publishers and printers of such publications to offer considerable securities before being allowed to ply their trade.[2]

But as might have been expected, Opposition considered the Bills aimed at "seditious" meetings and publications to contain the most serious threats to the nation's liberties. To take the latter Bill first, there was the strongest dislike, among Opposition for a measure, which proposed to make the "blasphemous" or "seditious" writer liable to seven years' transportation for a second offence, and even Castlereagh was sufficiently impressed by the argument, which pointed to transportation as having been employed heretofore only against offenders of a "felonious" nature, to offer the concession of seven years' banishment instead.[3] Opposition regarded the Seditious Meetings Bill as even more dangerous than Ministers' Libel Bill for, in proposing to make all "tumultuary" assemblies like those at Spa-Fields and Peterloo impossible for the future, Ministers practically proposed to sweep away the poor's right to convene any imposing or considerable meeting at all.[4] Lord-Lieutenants, Sheriffs and considerable bodies of Magistrates were to retain their right of convening County meetings; the Mayors might call town meetings and Aldermen ward meetings; but the general public were only to be allowed to convene parish meetings, or where parishes were subdivided into townships, only township meetings. Even so, for these shrunken local meetings to be legal, seven resident householders had, first, to give at least six days' written notice to a Magistrate who could, at his discretion, alter both the time and

[1] *Ibid.* (Commons), December 14th, for Lambton moving the omission of County Durham from the list of "disturbed" counties and other members moving the omission of Nottingham. It was on this day, too, that Bennet and Brougham argued the case for the "armed freeman" as the basis of the British constitution. When Tierney divided against night-searches (December 16th), his division was 46–158.

[2] *Ibid.* (Commons), December 20th, for Brougham's objections. A printer or publisher in London, Westminster, Edinburgh or Dublin had to find two or three "sufficient" sureties in £300 and to offer his own sureties for a similar sum. Elsewhere, it was only £200 and £200.

[3] *Ibid.* (Commons), December 15, 1819 (Castlereagh).

[4] Ricardo is an example. The famous economist argued that the only real check which the people had, in default of parliamentary reform, was the very right which Ministers were proposing to abolish—the right of meeting in such numbers, and showing such a front to ministers, as would afford a hope that bad measures would be abandoned, and that public opinion would be respected.

place suggested; no banners, badges, music or ordered processional marches were permitted; a stranger from outside the parish or township, who ventured to attend, was liable to a fine and twelve months imprisonment; and persons refusing to disperse, within a quarter of an hour of a magistrate's demand, were liable to seven years' transportation. Ministers were, indeed, so satisfied with their Bill that they seem, at first, to have had some notions of making it perpetual. It was represented as a concession to Opposition when Lord Castlereagh offered to take a five-year Bill,[1] and the pretence of "moderation" was maintained despite Opposition's proofs that virtually all the precedents pointed to a Bill that should run one year or less while a three-year Bill would represent the maximum severity of the past in the exceptionally dangerous season of 1795.

On January 29, 1820 came the death of George III, little more than a month after the "Six Acts" had been placed upon the Statute Book in his name. Under the constitution of that time, a General Election was necessary within six months and, normally, "Peterloo" and the "Six Acts" might have been of some profit to Opposition. The violent distaste, too, of the new King, George IV, for his much-injured Consort threatened Ministers with additional difficulties almost at once, as was made obvious by Hume, Tierney and Brougham after Parliament was reassembled, on February 17th, to dispatch indispensable business before the intended Dissolution. But Ministers doubtless knew that a revelation might soon be expected, calculated to be of the greatest electoral use to them. This revelation duly came, on February 23rd, when police officers and troops, apprised by an *agent provocateur* and informer long in touch with the Home Department, surrounded a house in Cato Street where twenty to thirty men were preparing to sally forth to butcher the Cabinet and proclaim a Republic.[2] Six days

[1] *Hansard's* reporting has been found very deficient. Other pieces of "moderation" offered, on this occasion, were the exemption of meetings, not connected with matters of Church and State (commercial meetings, for example), from the purview of the Act; the exemption of the stranger to the parish from the penalties prescribed for prohibited attendance unless he was present "knowingly and wilfully"; and the grant of permission to a non-resident property-owner to attend a meeting in a place where he held property. But as against these trifling concessions, Castlereagh reiterated the official view that, though he was prepared, in the first instance, to take a five-year Bill, Ministers considered that all future meetings ought to be deprived of the menacing and tumultuary character they had lately assumed.

[2] *Annual Register*, 1820, Chronicle, May 22nd and 23rd, for the evidence that had, by that time, been gathered, thanks mainly to the efforts of Alderman

after the "horrid" Cato Street conspiracy had been scotched for the death of one police officer, Parliament was prorogued and shortly afterwards dissolved. And the "horrid conspiracy's" effects on the subsequent elections may be surmised from the excited relish with which the "public" began debating one "horrible" detail after another—the intended slaughter of the entire Cabinet, assembled for a Cabinet dinner; the plan to bring away the heads of Sidmouth and Castlereagh in a bag; the projected conversion of the Mansion House into the seat of a provisional government and the attack, designed upon the Bank. Throughout the elections, moreover, there was constant alarmism as to the situation in Northern England and around Glasgow though the *provocateur*-inspired "rebellion" of Bonnymuir, near Glasgow, since it did not take place until April 5th, came too late to add a further appearance of strength to Government election arguments to the effect that "Peterloo" and the "Six Acts" had not been based on false alarms after all.[1] But many of the "respectable" voters, who had rallied to Opposition in 1818 and given it some of its victories, were certainly less ready to support Opposition candidates in 1820, immediately after Cato Street and before there was proof that a "police spy" full as vile as Oliver and Castles was largely responsible for the "horrid conspiracy".

Fortunately, despite a number of galling losses, the diminution

Wood, as to the character and activities of the "police spy" used on this occasion, Edwards, whose anxiety to inveigle men into treason was fully the equal of Castles' and Oliver's. He had ordered pikes; offered to provide pistols; made display of grenades, sword-sticks, powder and ball; talked violently of cutting off Castlereagh's head and placing it on a pole; and had apparently fabricated a plot for inveigling men into offering to shoot down the House of Commons from the public galleries before he had pinned his hopes on Thistlewood. On Thistlewood's release from prison in August 1819, Edwards had quickly got into touch with him and encouraged and helped him in the work of getting together the "horrid conspiracy", finally supplying the "information" that gave it its peculiar turn. It was Edwards who brought the "information" of the Cabinet dinner to be held at Lord Harrowby's house on February 23rd and he seems to have been, in part, responsible for suggesting the ease with which the entire Cabinet might be slaughtered. Once the conspirators had taken the bait, the dinner was cancelled though Lord Harrowby's servants were kept active on dinner-preparations to deceive the "horrid conspirators". It seems that Edwards's good-faith was assumed by Thistlewood because Edwards's brother had been secretary of the Spencean Society.

[1] *Annual Register*, 1820, Chronicle, has considerable matter on "Disturbances in the North" for the end of February and during March. For the beginning of April there is much matter headed "Disturbances in Glasgow", and under April 12th come "accurate details of the battle at Bonnybridge, as it is called". Unfortunately the "details" were very far from complete as the part played in the whole affair by the suggestions and provocations of informers did not become plain for some time.

of Opposition strength was small and was more than compensated for, from among the "independents" when, apart from "police spy" revelations, there came the Ministerial Bill of Pains and Penalties against the Queen. The most notable Opposition losses were in the City of London which had, in 1818, sent Aldermen Wood, Waithman and Thorp to join Opposition and now sent only Alderman Wood.[1] And another result, which was supposed to have caused Ministers no displeasure, was the loss of the Whigs' seat for Westminster. George Lamb was deemed to have shown no gratitude for the Ministerial support that had helped him to victory against Burdett and Hobhouse in 1819. Ministerial voters abandoned him in some numbers, Hobhouse was suffered to join Burdett as Westminster's second member, and the "respectable" Opposition was left to ponder over the lesson.[2] Meantime, while the tide was running with Government, a number of important successes were obtained in the Courts. In March, Hunt and his principal friends were, for their conduct at and before "Peterloo", found guilty of conspiracy to overturn the State; almost at the same time Sir Francis Burdett was found guilty of seditious libel when issuing a condemnation of "Peterloo"; and a little later, Sir Charles Wolseley was condemned for seditious words. Hunt, Burdett and Wolseley had, all three, to serve terms of imprisonment, though, doubtless, they obtained more comfortable conditions than did the minor fry of "conspirators" and vendors of "blasphemy" and "sedition" who were being proceeded against simultaneously.[3]

Possibly the end of Government's advantages from the "horrid conspiracy" must be dated at the beginning of May when, after the resolute death of Thistlewood and four of his followers on the scaffold, Alderman Wood gave to the world something like a complete picture of the sinister activities of the "police spy", Edwards. Certainly, Opposition showed plenty of spirit and activity in the

[1] Cf. *Annual Register*, 1820, Chronicle, under March 14th, for the poll-figures to elect the City's four members: Wilson, 5330; Ald. Wood, 5328; Sir W. Curtis, 4887; The Lord Mayor, 4236; Ald. Waithman, 4077; Ald. Thorp, 3898.

[2] *Ibid.*, under March 21st, for the poll-figures: Burdett, 5327; Hobhouse, 4882; Lamb, 4436.

[3] Hunt's sentence was to serve two years six months in Ilchester Gaol, and Wolseley's to serve eighteen months in Abingdon Gaol. There were some alleged irregularities about Burdett's trial; there followed an involved appeal not terminated until 1821, and by that time, it was felt wise to make the sentence three months' imprisonment and a fine of £2000.

new Parliament with Lord John Russell's attempt to transfer two members to Leeds from the admittedly corrupt Grampound; Sir James Mackintosh's six Bills for humanising the Criminal Law;[1] Brougham's impressive plan for National Education; Lord Archibald Hamilton's successful demand for the almost incredibly scanty lists of Scottish county voters;[2] Hume's eleven resolutions for reducing the unnecessarily high cost of revenue collection;[3] Lord Milton's effort to abolish the import duty on raw wool, in aid of the suffering West Riding;[4] and Lord Lansdowne's endeavours on behalf of freer trade.[5]

The Civil List for the new reign was, of course, another subject which furnished Opposition with undoubted opportunities. Brougham had, of old, constituted himself the special champion of the demand that the Droits of Admiralty, the West India Duties and similar Crown extras should not be forgotten when the Civil List was being fixed, and nobody in Parliament knew his way better about Civil List by-paths and extravagances than Tierney.[6] But there were those in Opposition who felt that mere demonstrations were made on the Civil List instead of positive efforts to secure retrenchment for a still-distressed country. They had reason to suspect, indeed, that Ministers were in such difficulties with the King, owing to his demand for a Divorce, that Opposition leaders were taking pains to appear, to Royal eyes, as not unattractive substitutes. The "independents", too, were affected by similar considerations, and here is one disappointed Opposition view of the Session, first, at June 22nd and, then, at July 16th:[7]

June 22nd

There is [also] in the House of Commons a large floating party which though it generally supports Ministers, is by no means under

[1] Three of these reached the Statute Book, after being conservatively amended in the Lords.

[2] *Hansard's Parliamentary Debates*, under May 25th. Lord Archibald Hamilton had the distinction of forcing the Government to give up the notion of appointing anew a fifth Baron of the Exchequer in Scotland though there was a Report to the effect that the business could be transacted by four. His division of May 15th was 177 against Government's 189.

[3] *Ibid.*, July 4th. Hume had found here his life's work, the forcing of "economy" and "retrenchment" on reluctant Government departments by facts and figures found by minute study and comparison of their own documents.

[4] *Ibid.*, May 26th. Milton secured a division of 128–202.

[5] Lansdowne became Chairman of a Lords' Committee and there was another in the Commons.

[6] *Hansard's Parliamentary Debates*, May 5th, for Brougham's motion. Tierney's Civil List speech was made on May 8th.

[7] *Notes by Sir Robert Heron, Bart.*, pp. 117–20.

their control, and gives them much uneasiness, yet, this party has never interfered in favour of economy, or of liberty, or to diminish the enormous standing army. At the beginning of the Session, there seemed to me far too great a complaisance in the Opposition towards the new reign. Both Brougham and Tierney were strongly infected with it, and nothing could be done against the measures of Ministers.

July 16th.

The Session is on the point of closing, (not properly, indeed, the Session, as we are to have an adjournment and not a prorogation,) and a worse Session for the country we never yet had. The subservient feeling towards the new King, and in some the hope of succeeding to a tottering Administration, which had offended the King, made all attempts hopeless to oppose the extravagance of Ministers in almost every department; and the arrival of the Queen totally put an end to all interest in, or attention to, any other subject.

The Queen, whose arrival in the country on June 6th, had changed the course of politics was the same Princess of Wales whose position had already caused some previous disturbance. The King, whose dissolute life had been notorious for two generations, had separated himself from her, in 1796, shortly after their marriage, but had yet requested an inquiry into her conduct some ten years later. On that occasion she had been cleared of all but indiscretion but, undoubtedly, after leaving the country in 1814 for travel abroad, she was guilty of worse than indiscretion. In 1818 there was already sufficient evidence of her *liaison* with a low-born but handsome Italian favourite for Ministers to consent to send out privately what became known as the "Milan Commission". On the basis of the evidence collected by this Commission, the King, immediately on his accession, demanded a Divorce Bill from his Ministers who, however, seem to have gone to the point of resignation in support of their view, that a King, suspected of continuous adultery with Lady Conyngham after a long period of similar misconduct, was not in a strong enough position to take a high moral line. To the considerable indignation of the King, Ministers finally decided to convey to his wife, through Brougham as her legal adviser, an offer of financial advantages in return for her promise to stay abroad and to refrain from claiming the title or prerogatives of Queen. Brougham played a dubious part in the affair, keeping a foot in both camps, but the Queen, with the advice and assistance of Alderman Wood, came to England to face her accusers. The enthusiastic rally of the populace

in her favour, as soon as she appeared, was phenomenal and was increased by the pamphleteers, among whom Home and the caricaturist, Cruikshank, had already combined to inflict tremendous punishment upon King and Ministers by a new type of cheap illustrated publication.[1] Ministers prepared to put their evidence against the Queen before both Houses but still made some attempts to secure a seemly end to the trouble by negotiation.[2] Only when the Queen, even more encouraged by the uproarious mob-support she was receiving,[3] refused to compromise, did the Ministers finally determine on a Bill of Pains and Penalties to deprive her of the claim to the title and prerogatives of the Queen Consort. The Bill was introduced into the Lords in July, and from August 19th to October 30th the Ministers' case, strongly supported by Italian witnesses, was argued by the Law Officers and combated by the Queen's Counsel, Brougham, Denman, Williams and Dr. Lushington. The entire nation seems to have followed the case, day by day, with unwearying attention and in the minutest detail.

To read the Reports of the evidence offered by witnesses is to become convinced that the Queen had been guilty of a long and systematic course of misconduct. But the populace, in its detestation of the men of "Peterloo" and the "Six Acts", insisted on believing, with passion, that Ministers were engaged in yet another plot against innocence and that they had imported a swarm of lying Italians, at great expense, to swear the Crown off the Queen's head in order to please their master and keep their places. In view of the enthusiastic popular feeling for the Queen, Opposition swallowed its doubts and scruples and decided that the Queen, admittedly much injured in the past, must be declared "Not Guilty". Others, not normally acting with Opposition but now anxious to tranquillise a dangerously-agitated nation, decided, even when they thought the Queen guilty, that she was a hardly-used woman and that they must either vote against the Second

[1] *The Political House that Jack Built* had been issued by Hone and Cruikshank, with immense success, before the appearance of the Queen. Thereafter came *The Queen's Matrimonial Ladder, The Man in the Moon, Non mi Ricordo, The Right Divine of Kings to Govern Wrong* and much else.

[2] First Castlereagh and Wellington negotiated with Brougham and Denman; then the majority of the Commons pressed negotiation on the Queen.

[3] Based on the writer's collection of pro-Caroline material, including song-sheets for street-sale bearing such titles as *The Britons' Hymn, God Save Queen Caroline, O, Britons, remember your Queen's happy Days, My Husband, God save the Queen, Queen Caroline and the British Trio,* and *Four New Songs on the Bursting of the GREEN BAGS! ! ! or Caroline Triumphant.*

Reading of the Bill of Pains and Penalties or, at least, must refrain from dividing in its favour.[1] Accordingly, on November 6th, when a very full debate had taken place in the Lords on the long proceedings that had been going on there, Ministers' majority, despite Lord Grenville's now habitual defection from Opposition, was not greater than one of 123 against 95. And on November 10th, Ministers' majority for the Third Reading of their Bill fell to 108 votes against 99. After such a preliminary history, it was, of course, almost hopeless to think of forcing the Bill through the Commons, and the Ministers were compelled to announce its withdrawal amid tempests of public rejoicing and applause for the Queen. Before giving up a measure, on which they had spent so much labour and public time, Ministers doubtless offered their resignation to the smarting monarch, whom they seemed to have failed. Though the King must have been tempted to think of alternative Governments under Lord Grenville, he was probably wise in deciding to master his irritation and to keep the Cabinet together that had risked so much for him. Canning, indeed, who had made difficulties on the course pursued in regard to the Queen, was allowed to go but debating support was expected from him against the hot Opposition attacks that might be awaited when normal Parliamentary business was resumed in January 1821.[2]

Ministers, of course, had a good deal of the expected trouble to encounter during 1821. But, on the whole, annoying and embarrassing though it was, it proved less serious than they had expected. For one thing, the mob's incessant *Caroline for ever* was beginning to disgust the "moderate" section of the "public" who had not wanted the Queen victimised but hardly believed that she was a spotless angel of innocence. Moreover, the King's entourage had apparently seen to it that a weekly paper should be launched, specially devoted to exposing the "humbug" of the "Queenites", and this periodical, *John Bull*, forcefully written by Theodore Hook and never afraid of outmatching the mob in scurrility, scored a great and instant success which, in comparative

[1] Cf. *Hansard's Parliamentary Debates*, November 6th, for Lords de Clifford, Grantham and Gosford. It should, however, be remembered that *Hansard* differs from some of the Press reports even of a speech like de Clifford's. Thus, one version consulted reported de Clifford as satisfied that adultery had been committed whereas *Hansard* falls short of this.

[2] Canning had, of course, nothing to hope from Opposition. And he would need the good-will of King and Cabinet if he should decide, abandoning his last hopes of the political lead at home, to accept the Governor-Generalship of India.

effect, has never been equalled in the whole history of High Tory journalism.[1] Finally, by themselves offering to raise Caroline's income from £35,000 to £50,000 a year, Ministers deprived Opposition of, at least, one cry and strengthened their tactical position to meet the rest. Of these, the first to call out a Parliamentary demonstration was the cry that now the Queen had been found "innocent" of the "cruel charges" laid against her, it was doubly wrong to keep her name excluded from the list of the Royal Family to be prayed for in church. Supported by heavy petitioning, Opposition made the "restoration of the Queen's name to the Liturgy" the first battle-ground of the Session, and the division of January 26th, at 209 against 310, was not a bad one. It possibly encouraged the Queen to make the grave mistake of sending to the Commons a message, from which it might be inferred that she would not take the income offered her, and so expedite a "settlement", unless the money was accompanied by the restoration to her of the habitual rights and privileges of a Queen Consort, especially the placing of her name in the Prayer Book.[2] The heavy expense of the long struggle for her "rights" made the execution of her implied threat almost impossible from the first, and when the threat itself was made one of the reasons for asking the House to reconsider its vote, Government obtained a majority of 298 against 178 (February 13th).[3] Meanwhile, on February 6th, on a direct Censure motion from the Opposition, Ministers had obtained the even better majority of 334 against 178. If the Opposition leaders had been able to offer the Queen a maintenance from their private purses, until full "justice" was done her, they might yet have been able to return to the fray. A national subscription, headed by large

[1] Cf. *John Bull*, February 4, 1821, for the "monster" sale attained within two months of the paper's launching: "We sell Seven Thousand Papers; and it is a small computation to suppose that ten persons read each number." For *John Bull*'s methods of controversy from the first, see the number for January 28th: "It is said we have made a covert attack upon the sobriety of the Queen. This is a mistake: our attack was a very open one.... As for our remarks on Mrs. Brougham ... we merely know that the announcement of the birth of Mr. Brougham's child followed that of his marriage sooner than such events generally do, for which all the papers of the day are our witnesses...."

[2] *Hansard's Parliamentary Debates*, January 21st, Castlereagh's angry comment was: "It was not for her to make conditions with the House, as to the terms upon which she would consent to receive any money.... In the first instance she said she would receive no money from the Ministers of the Crown, and now she refused to accept it from Parliament. He should be glad to know if she would not consent to accept a pecuniary provision till she was placed in a royal palace, and had all her rights, as she termed it ... till she had the King's authority laid at her feet...." (This version is not quite *Hansard's*.)

[3] *John Bull*, February 18th.

donations from the Opposition Peers, was apparently considered but dismissed as impracticable, and the Queen had, after all, to draw quickly on the Treasury.[1] In these circumstances, it is plain why Opposition resolved, for the time, to let the Queen's affairs rest and turn to other matters till a more favourable opportunity offered.

But while Opposition concentrated behind the "economy" motions which gave Hume a national reputation in a single Session, while they devoted attention to Catholic claims, the reallotment of Grampound's forfeited seats or the Board of Control, Ministers knew full well that the approaching Coronation would offer fresh fields for Opposition campaigns. Fortunately for Ministers, it turned out that there were some precedents against a Queen Consort's coronation even when she was living in harmony with the King and had not been separated, like Caroline, for twenty-five years and charged with ignoble adulteries.[2] Moreover, the whole matter could be treated as not in the political arena at all but as one to be laid before the Privy Council for a legal decision. As events turned out, the Privy Council's decision was not given against the Queen until July 10th, though July 11th had been fixed for the end of the Session and July 19th for the Coronation. And though Hume led an Opposition demonstration on July 11th, his Address to the King could not even be taken to a division since Black Rod arrived before Hume himself had finished. The Queen made her own demonstration on Coronation Day, when she sought admission to the Abbey and was refused. It was a demonstration of doubtful utility since, cheered as she was by many in the immense throngs of spectators on the streets, there were also some who ventured to laugh and to hiss.[3] And, perhaps, it was a sense that she was committed to a failing cause that contributed to her relatively sudden death on August 7th, after only a short illness.

The Ministers, however, had not quite come to the end of their troubles on the Queen's account, for the funeral procession of the unfortunate lady became a subject of bitter recrimination. The

[1] *John Bull*, March 4th, on *The Queen has taken the Money! ! !*

[2] Cf. *Ibid.*, July 8th, for the two last instances of non-coronation, in the cases of Catherine of Braganza, wife of Charles II, and Dorothea, wife of George I, who was never released from a Hanoverian fortress all the time she was nominally Queen of England.

[3] *Ibid.*, July 22nd, of course, made the most of this: "Accounts differ as to her Majesty's mode of applying for admission to the Coronation but all agree in the decisive and unquestionable fact, that wherever she applied, she was treated by the decent part of the spectators with marked disapprobation."

Queen's death revived, for a space, the ardour of her "mob" which determined to foil Government's alleged plan of denying to the City and the East End a chance of paying their "last respects" to Caroline. The Queen had directed that her body was to be laid to rest in Brunswick presumably because she could not trust the Ministers to give her a fitting resting-place in Britain. The natural road to the embarkation port of Harwich should, it was said, have been through the City and Mile End, and the mob fought successfully, on August 13th, to divert the procession from the route laid down by the authorities to that desired by the people. Moreover, fresh problems arose because two civilians were killed by troops during the day and because the King insisted on dismissing Major-General Wilson, an Oppositionist M.P., for expressing disapprobation of the conduct of the military. From the long-reverberating echoes of these troubles,[1] brought upon them by the mere shade of the "injured Queen", the King and his Ministers, doubtless, found it possible to estimate how much they had gained from her removal by death.[2]

[1] Cf. *John Bull*, September 9th, for a furious editorial on the "bare-faced HUMBUG of the two Coroners' juries" who had begun a minute examination of the conduct of troops and officers. And as to the affair of Major-General Wilson, *John Bull* was still, on October 28th, fuming about the meetings being held in his praise and the subscriptions being gathered to compensate him for the loss of his position in the Army. On November 11th Wilson may yet be found with a jeering editorial to himself headed, "The Military Mountebank". In virtue of an Austrian decoration, he called himself "Sir" Robert.

[2] Cf. *Memoirs of Her Late Gracious Majesty, Queen Caroline*, issued by George Smeeton, for the attempt to wring the last touch of pathos out of every incident not only on the road to Harwich and embarkation but through Germany to the Queen's last resting-place in the family vault at Brunswick.

CHAPTER XXI

CASTLEREAGH PASSES, CANNING SUCCEEDS, 1821–5

Greville Memoirs on Castlereagh's death under August 13, 1822.

"No event ever gave rise to more speculation . . . and the general opinion seems to be that Canning will not go to India, but will be appointed in his room. It certainly opens a door to his ambition as well as to that of Peel, who, unless Canning comes into office, must of necessity lead the House of Commons. Another speculation is that Lord Liverpool will take this opportunity of resigning, and that the King will form a Whig Ministry. I do not believe Lord Liverpool wishes to resign. . . .

"Nobody can deny that his [Castlereagh's] talents were great, and perhaps he owed his influence and authority as much to his character as to his abilities. His appearance was dignified and imposing; he was affable in his manners and agreeable in society. The great feature was a cool and determined courage, which gave an appearance of resolution and confidence to all his actions, and inspired his friends with admiration and excessive devotion to him. . . . As a speaker he was prolix, monotonous, and never eloquent. . . . But, notwithstanding these defects, and still more the ridicule which his extraordinary phraseology had drawn upon him, he was always heard with attention. He never spoke ill; his speeches were continually replete with good sense and strong argument. . . . With these qualities, it may be asked why he was not a better minister? . . . I believe that he was seduced by his vanity, that his head was turned by emperors, kings, and congresses, and that he was resolved that the country which he represented should play as conspicuous a part as any other in the political dramas which were acted upon the continent. The result of his policy is this, that we are mixed up in the affairs of the Continent in a manner which we have never been before, which entails upon us endless negotiations and enormous expenses. We have associated ourselves with the members of the Holy Alliance, and countenanced the acts of ambition and despotism in such a manner as to have drawn upon us the detestation of the nations of the Continent."

Lord Liverpool on Catholic Emancipation (House of Lords, May 17, 1825).

"If these measures should pass, the Protestant succession would not be worth a farthing. Would it not be hard upon the King and the heir to the throne that they must be bound to the Protestant faith, while the chief justice, the ministers and secretaries of state, might be Roman Catholics? Why was this? Where was the danger in having a Popish king or a Popish chancellor, if all the other executive officers might acknowledge the Pope? He thought there was less danger in a Popish chancellor, who might be removed at pleasure, than in a Popish chief-justice, who would hold the administration of the criminal law in his control, and could only be removed by a peculiar process of law. . . ."

Sir Robert Heron, M.P. on the 1825 Session from his *Notes*.

"In Parliament, the more liberal commercial system introduced by Ministers, and the acknowledgement by Canning, of the new South American States, weakened the Opposition, and even diminished the inclination to oppose; and the only remaining contest of importance seemed to be between Canning on one side, and the old Chancellor on the other: the hoary enemy of every liberal principle, Lord Liverpool, vacillating between the two. The most interesting question was that of Catholic Emancipation. . . . There were many favourable circumstances. . . ; yet after having passed the Commons, the bill was thrown out in the Lords by a large majority: this unfortunate result was chiefly to be ascribed to the virulent opposition of Lord Liverpool."

THOUGH party contests about the Queen occupied much energy and attention during the 1821 Session, the continued "distress" of which the "agricultural interest" was complaining made another main Sessional theme. Industry, though still calling loudly for tax reduction and "economy", was, during the Session, in the very act of making a rapid recovery from the "bad trade" of 1819. But the "agricultural interest", which for a succession of years had "suffered" from an average of corn prices far below the 80*s*. 0*d*. standard, that had been hoped for in 1815, proved much more troublesome and mutinous. Western, the Opposition member for Essex, became the agricultural interest's mouthpiece, and he was inclined to complain not merely of over-high expenditure and the consequent over-taxation of agriculture but to make a grievance even of the increasing corn-imports from Ireland. Ministers found it wise to concede a Committee on Agriculture, and before it, the "agricultural interest" hoped to get its chance of proving all manner of things—the need, for example, of better agricultural protection than had been given in 1815 and the common justice of finding for agriculture an adequate compensation for the return to gold, a return now virtually complete and inflicting special hardships on "agriculture" though very profitable to the "moneyed interest" and the "fundholder".[1] The Committee, too, was only a fortnight old when Western obtained an important success in the full House of Commons by defeating Ministers, in a division of 149–125, on his demand for an end of the Additional Malt Tax of 1819. But the "agricultural interest" was robbed of this victory when Ministers succeeded in reversing the decision, and there was keen disappointment also at the course of events in the Committee on Agriculture where Robinson and Huskisson, backed by Ricardo, the great economist, contrived to

[1] *John Bull*, March 11, 1821, for the proceedings on March 7th when the Committee was granted on the demand of Mr. Gooch, member for Suffolk. Gooch openly admitted that he meant war, not only on the 1815 Corn Law as insufficient, but also on the "warehousing system" which allowed foreign corn to be warehoused in this country so that it could be released duty-free as soon as the Statutory price of the 1815 Corn Law was reached. The currency aspect of agricultural difficulties was insisted on by later speakers, including Western. Of Mr. G. Bennett, for example, it was reported that he "contended, that the Committee should consider the general state of taxation, and the state of the currency, or the enquiry would be a mere delusion". Robinson, meanwhile, warned members against expecting the Exchequer to give up £600,000 per annum by turning revenue duties imposed on some articles of import, disliked by the farmer, into prohibitory duties.

thwart the agriculturists' plans so thoroughly that these seceded from the Committee. In June another success was obtained against Ministers in the full House when Curwen divided at 141–113 for the repeal of the duty on agricultural horses. Ministers decided to let the repeal stand in an effort to placate the "agricultural interest" which was now thoroughly aggrieved.[1]

It is against this background of a thoroughly irritated "agricultural interest", calling loudly for "economy", remission of taxation and much more, that other Sessional events have to be seen. Hume's famous campaign of dividing against every possible item in Palmerston's Army Estimates, even when claimed as already reduced, received greater tolerance from the average "independent member" than had ever been known before.[2] And it was the support of the "independents" that gave him a very notable triumph in another of his campaigns—that in which he demanded an end of sinecurism and extravagance in the revenue collection. It may be well to pass over such other unprecedented Sessional events as the passage of a liberal Catholic Emancipation Bill right through the Commons, or the first instalment of Parliamentary Reform effected when Grampound's two members were transferred to Yorkshire, in order to concentrate on even more surprising events during the Parliamentary Recess. When the harvest of 1821 proved deficient both in quantity and quality and yet prices stayed ruinously low, because of the accumulated stocks from previous years, landlords and farmers began an intensified agitation on almost Radical lines. Speech after speech, delivered at County meetings during the winter of 1821–1822, may be found denouncing Government extravagance and calling for Parliamentary Reform as the only remedy.[3] *John Bull* was furious that at the Suffolk meetings, on January 29th, 1822, two dukes, those of Grafton and Norfolk, had supported the agitation while at Norwich, just previously, the King's own brother, the Duke of

[1] So far Government could he held to have offered nothing to relieve agricultural "distress" save a new method of calculating the "corn averages" or, in other words, of calculating when foreign import became permissible. (Cf. *Hansard*, February 26th, Robinson.)

[2] On such a day, for example, as April 11th there were divisions of 54–83, 60–104, 56–98, 44–92, 51–83, and 53–82 in a fashion which would not have been tolerated by a normal House.

[3] *John Bull*, January 20, 1822, thus summarised Lord Suffield's speech at the Norfolk Agricultural Meeting of January 12th: "WILSON [the dismissed General] — PREROGATIVE — REFORM — RETRENCHMENT — RESPONSIBILITY OF MINISTERS — UNFAIR REPRESENTATION IN PARLIAMENT — SINECURES — COUNTY RECEIVERS [of revenue as investigated by Hume], and JOSEPH HUME."

Sussex, had been imported for "wheezing out Radicalism, and tearing his lungs to pieces in chorussing songs about slavery, and chains, and fiddle-de-dee".[1] But the temptation to quote Suffolk or Norfolk eloquence shall be resisted; the remarkable Edinburgh meeting, presaging the end of Tory domination in Scotland, shall be passed over;[2] and even Cobbett's welcome by Huntingdon farmers shall be neglected in order to concentrate on a surprising Opposition gathering at York. Here is a shortened adaptation of *John Bull*'s angry account of the assembly and of the eloquence it heard from a Tory convert, Lord Normanby, son of the Cabinet Minister, Lord Mulgrave:[3]

At a tavern in York, we are told four hundred persons calling themselves Whigs, sat down to a sumptuous dinner . . . Marmaduke Wyvill Esq. M.P. in the chair. . . .

It will be observed that the first toast was—"The King—*may he speedily dismiss his present evil ministers.*" . . . The next toast was—"The memory of our late injured and BELOVED Queen"—which was drank standing, and in silence. . . . The next toast was—"SIR GEORGE CAYLEY, and the Whig Club of York."

An eminent young coal-merchant, of the name of LAMBTON, then rose—and spluttered a certain number of words about "the minions of despotism", and "the slaves of power"—he told his hearers that they had elected for their representatives two as honourable and independent men as were to be found in England. . . . He alluded to the QUEEN, with great energy. . . . "The malice of her enemies" said this young person, "has sunk her to the grave;" and here, if we are to believe the TIMES and CHRONICLE—all the Whigs wept—sweet, tender-hearted fellows—what a moving scene!

Having bestowed a few lamentations on the rioters, who were shot while obstructing this wretched woman's funeral, Mr. Lambton proceeded to eulogise Mr. [General] Wilson. . . . The Greeks had their share of Mr. Lambton's attention; and lastly he made an allusion to his efforts at obtaining a REFORM. . . . At the conclusion of this speech the shouts were *literally* deafening.

To him, grieved are we to say it, succeeded—the LORD VISCOUNT NORMANBY—the eldest son of the EARL OF MULGRAVE, who talked in a most incoherent way of TORYISM—we quote a few of his words. . . .

"The spirit of Toryism," said his Lordship, "has so many ramifications,—so many holds on the follies, vices, and passions of mankind—so many temptations to the cupidity of the selfish—it held forth so many prospects of advantages to the corrupt—its power had been so consolidated by the length of time it had predominated, and every

[1] *John Bull*, February 3rd.
[2] *Ibid.*, February 10th. The occasion was a Fox dinner.
[3] *Ibid.*, December 9, 1821.

fresh instance of corruption so added to its strength, and every fresh instance of profligacy so increased its means, that it must be owned it had become extremely formidable; yet he did not despair of crushing it by a firm and manly perseverance. *That monster of corruption*, the national debt, *had enormously increased during the present administration*. . . .

Dangerous as seemed the omens for the 1822 Session, Ministers were not without the means of strengthening themselves. Reinforcement was, indeed, sought in several different directions. Peel was brought to the Home Office to replace Sidmouth who wished to withdraw from departmental work if not from the Cabinet; Lord Wellesley was made Viceroy of seriously-disturbed Ireland; Canning was promised the Indian Governor-Generalship at the approaching vacancy; and, most important of all as it seemed to the mind of the time, the Grenvilles agreed to throw in their lot with Ministers. Liverpool's eagerness for completing the breach between the two Opposition factions, led by Grey and Grenville, may be judged from the price he paid for the mere Grenville rump.[1] He did not even get Grenville's name, for that politician preferred not to take office but to hand over his much-diminished group to his nephew Lord Buckingham. Yet for a mere handful of votes Liverpool gave Buckingham a dukedom; made Charles Wynn President of the Board of Control with two more Grenvilles to help him there; and, to pass over other concessions, appointed Plunket, Irish Attorney-General. This last was a wiser nomination than the rest in view of the serious agrarian disorders in Ireland, and Plunket's reputation as the most powerful Parliamentary advocate of Catholic Emancipation. Moreover, when two Emancipationist Irishmen, Wellesley and Plunket, had been newly appointed to controlling posts in Irish administration, it became harder for Opposition to raise objections to the recommendation of Irish coercive legislation implied in the King's Speech of February 5, 1822.[2] Two other pieces of Ministerial guile prepared for Parliament in the King's Speech were the announcement of "a large reduction in our Annual Expenditure, particularly in

[1] Spencer Walpole's *History*, ii, 41–2, has some of the witticisms that passed on the subject. The best was, perhaps, Lord Holland's "all articles are now to be had at low prices, except Grenvilles".

[2] *John Bull*, February 10th: "I am determined to use all the means in my power for the protection of the persons and property of my loyal and peaceable subjects. And it will be for your immediate consideration, whether the existing laws are sufficient."

our Naval and Military Establishments" and an assurance of "early attention" for the "depressed state of the Agricultural Interest".

Though Ministers had a long and weary Session which went on into August, they came out better, perhaps, than they themselves would have forecast. Their new Irish appointments helped them to make an expeditious beginning and to inscribe in the Statute Book within a week, and against very little real opposition, save on detail, two momentous Irish Acts, the one suspending Habeas Corpus in Ireland for six months and the other re-enacting the Insurrection Act for three years.[1] Opposition's criticism of detail, too, was of the narrowly constitutional type which hardly dealt with the essential fact that Ireland was disorderly because Ireland was starving as a result of the potato failure.[2] Then, Opposition signally failed to win the "independent" members to the view that Major-General Wilson had been unfairly and unconstitutionally dismissed from the Army, the big debate of February 13th ending with a division of 97 against Government's 199. It even seemed at one stage that Government's offer of a new Agricultural Committee to study the results obtained by the last and to suggest how the Corn Law of 1815 could be made more satisfactory might do something to appease the "distressed agricultural interest". Castlereagh certainly allowed it to be known that he shared farmers' dislike of the 1815 clauses which would allow a vast flood of foreign corn unlimited freedom upon British markets for three months after the 80*s.* 0*d.* price had been reached.[3] But Ministers could not dream of granting agricultural demands for a 40*s.* 0*d.* Corn Duty or for a scaling down of the National Debt burden so that the "moneyed interest" was only left in the same relative position, and with the same purchasing power, as during the war. In the matter of Corn Law changes Ministers only felt able to concede that, if and when wheat entered from abroad on the attainment of a home price of 80*s.* 0*d.*, a check on the dreaded flood should be imposed by a 5*s.* 0*d.* duty which should rise in stages as the price

[1] *John Bull*, February 17th, reporting Royal Assent on February 11th.

[2] *Ibid.*, February 10th, for Opposition amendments of February 8th.

[3] *Ibid.*, February 17th, reporting Castlereagh on the 15th: "a modification in the existing laws would be in some degree beneficial and was indeed necessary.... The great evil of these laws was ... to leave no medium between an unlimited supply and an absolute monopoly. The smallest rise in the price—nay even a single penny over 80*s.* would open the ports to the whole world for three months—except the ports between the Oder and the Bidassoa."

fell.[1] And in regard to equalising matters as between the "moneyed interest" and agriculture, Government promised to carry through a conversion of the Navy 5 per cents to a lower rate of interest as a first instalment of changes which might be expected ultimately to reduce the interest-rate paid by the nation to 3 per cent. But the immediate results of the conversion were to be no more than a partial remission of Malt Duty though, for further remedy, a Loan Fund of four millions was set up from which parishes, whose Poor Law problems threatened to become overwhelming, might borrow to tide over the emergency.[2]

It is, perhaps, little wonder that the "agricultural interest" found this programme completely insufficient and continued agitation, in the counties and at Westminster, for an altogether bigger plan of tax remissions than Ministers were prepared for. On the question of tax remission and on the related question of finding the wherewithal by cutting down sinecurism and extravagance, Opposition could, of course, work in happy harmony with the "agricultural interest". Thus, on March 1st, Ministers were defeated in a division of 182–128 on a motion which, in essence, called for a peace-time reduction of two in the salaried members of the Board of Admiralty.[3] And only the day before, on a motion for the Repeal of the Salt Tax "which pressed upon the labourer, the mechanic and the artisan, in the proportion of ten to one, in comparison with the rich man", Ministers had raised so bare a majority—a mere 169 against 165—that a big reduction of the Salt Tax had immediately to be considered by the Chancellor of the Exchequer. In point of fact, Vansittart found it wise to add to Malt and Salt Duty reductions, remissions of taxation on leather, ship-tonnage, and Irish hearths and windows and to find the money by adding to the yield, that he had obtained from the conversion of Navy 5 per cents, other yields derivable from the taxation of Government salaries and from an involved plan of lessening the immediate pressure of military and naval pensions.

Yet, to the indignation of *John Bull*, the pressure out of doors was

[1] Cf. *Ibid.*, March 3rd, for the original suggestions of Ministers to the Agricultural Committee on February 25th. Under them the duty would have risen to 10*s.*, for example, at a home price of between 72*s.* and 80*s.* and have fallen to 1*s.* at a home price of over 85*s.*

[2] *Ibid.*, February 17th, for Castlereagh's speech of February 15th. Castlereagh was now known by the name of Lord Londonderry, having inherited his father's Irish Marquisate during 1821.

[3] *Ibid.*, March 3rd.

continued in a series of meetings which alleged the countryside to be in the darkest state of distress imaginable. A Surrey meeting at Epsom, addressed by Lord King, Thelwall, Cobbett, Hon H. G. Bennett and Lord Ellenborough; a Lincoln meeting, which heard even the notion of reducing expense by abandoning Gibraltar;[1] a Bedford meeting presided over by Bedford's Duke—such assemblies stimulated new and awkward pressure in Parliament. There, in soothing answer to agricultural plans for obtaining long lists of new prohibitory duties against all manner of foreign importations, Opposition members presented an apparently less objectionable project for taking twenty millions annually off the taxes by strict economy. And, as a result, there were more awkward and embarrassing moments, as when, for example, a motion was carried against Government, on May 2nd, for the abolition of one of the two offices of Postmaster-General and when, on May 15th and 16th, the House of Commons was hot on the trail of a diplomatic "job" which had been perpetrated as part of the price of buying over the Grenvilles. On the Postmastership, Ministers found it wise to give way for fear of worse troubles for Castlereagh, then engaged in proposing the difficult Corn Law of 1822 and in furnishing some help to Vansittart, embroiled in controversies with Opposition on his plans of Debt and Pension Conversion. Castlereagh undoubtedly got little aid, during the Session of 1822, from either Peel or Wynn, who had been brought in to assist him, and the effort to cope, on unfamiliar economic ground, with men like Ricardo, in the midst, too, of a most difficult Session, precipitated a mental break-down with large consequences in politics. On August 6th, Parliament was prorogued and, on August 12th, Castlereagh, since 1821 Lord Londonderry, committed suicide under the illusion that he was in great personal danger.[2]

It is possible that Castlereagh was over his worst troubles by the time of his death, for urban prosperity had already begun rising to boom-conditions and *John Bull* had already ventured to satirise the more exaggerated and self-interested of the wailings from the farmers' friends. In one ironic comment on the huge

[1] *John Bull*, April 7th, for *John Bull* thus interpreting the speech of Sir Robert Heron, M.P.

[2] *Greville Memoirs*, under August 20th, mention his saying, in his last conversation with Wellington: "To prove to you what danger I am in, my own servants think so, and that I ought to go off directly, that I have no time to lose, and they keep my horses saddled that I may get away quickly; they think that I should not have time to go away in a carriage."

crowds that had gathered for the Epsom Races, *John Bull* had ventured on a counter-attack like the following:[1]

> Upwards of fifty thousand of the most unhappy of our fellow-countrymen, victims of tyranny and taxation, no longer ago than the week before last, dragged their limbs to this sad and deplorable spectacle; and the vast sums of money taken from some of them, and the immense quantity of provisions and liquor which the poorer part of the slaves were compelled to devour, were unparalleled, we believe, on any former similar occasion.
>
> It made our hearts bleed to behold our excellent and free-born taylor, driving, with great labour and danger, a tandem, with two blood horses; and we nearly wept when we found that our boot-maker and his unhappy family could only afford a barouche and four, hired for the day.
>
> But we had also an eye to the agricultural part of the question and we were struck with horror and amazement at the pale, emaciated, and thread-bare appearance of the broken-down farmers of Surrey, Berks, and Bucks, who crawled out to the mournful scene upon their starving ponies, for which some, in their despair for money, were wild enough to ask 70, 80, and 100 guineas each.
>
> At the inns on the road, the expences the tax-ridden slaves had incurred, were abominable. A hatter in Bond-street, was charged seventeen shillings a bottle for Champaigne, and a wretched party of landholders in the neighbourhood of Leatherhead, who have threatened to abandon their farms, were driven by their grief to drink two dozen and four bottles of that shameful imposition upon British credulity, called Chateau Margant.

Theodore Hook might, of course, indulge in these pointed witticisms but Lord Liverpool, with the weight of the State on his shoulders, could not afford to take so light-hearted a view. He quickly resolved that Canning must be stopped from going to India as Governor-General and must be offered the Leadership of the Commons in place of the deceased Castlereagh. This, Liverpool knew, would involve him in considerable trouble with the King and might also give him a great deal of personal anxiety as Prime Minister since Canning was known to have aspired to the first place in Administration since 1809. But without Canning's splendid eloquence Liverpool did not see how the House of Commons could continue to be controlled by such a Government as his. And he was, of course, right, seeing the danger of war that

[1] *John Bull*, June 2nd. The passage shows what an asset Hook's power of fluent ridicule was proving to Ministers. It was often better than *The Anti-Jacobin* had been. Before long it was to pour a flood of scornful jeering on the plebeian preparations to give Henry Hunt a great welcome on his release from imprisonment.

arose on the "Spanish Question" during 1823 and the new winter of "distress" agitation by the agricultural interest that preceded it. But, perhaps, before going into Canning's conduct of the 1823 Session, it might be well to take the "distress" agitation to the "Jacobinic" summit it was thought to have reached at Norwich, on January 3, 1823, under the stress of farming disappointment and Radical impulsion. On that occasion, a Norfolk County meeting, designed to give the famous Whig veteran, Coke of Holkham, a stick with which to beat the Government during the coming Session, was taken charge of by Cobbett who, like the now-liberated Hunt, had grown hopeful of converting the farming community. And here is the *Annual Register*'s summary of the Norwich proceedings:[1]

> In the meeting held at Norwich, on the 3rd of January, the Whigs who had convened it and meant it to be a vehicle for their own opinions, were completely defeated by the unexpected appearance of Mr. Cobbett on the stage; who after having exposed the fallacy and incoherence of the resolutions proposed by them, moved an address of his own, which was carried triumphantly by the acclamations of the assembled mob, or at least of that part of it, which was nearest to the hustings. This petition, after the usual complaints against sinecures, taxes, the church, and the national debt, prayed an efficient reform of parliament, in order that such parliament might adopt the measures necessary to effect the following purposes: 1. An appropriation of a part of the property of the church to the liquidation of the debt: 2. A reduction of the standing army, including staff, barracks and colleges, to a scale of expense as low as that of the army before the last war: 3. A total abolition of all sinecures, pensions, grants, and emoluments, not merited by public services: 4. A sale of the crown lands, and an application of the money towards the liquidation of the debt: 5. An equitable adjustment with regard to the public debt, and also with regard to all contracts between man and man. But as to effect these purposes might require a lapse of months, the petitioners further prayed, that parliament in order to afford immediate protection against ruin, would be pleased, 1. To suspend, by law, for one year, all distresses for rent, and to cause distresses already issued to be set aside; 2. To suspend all process for tithes, for the same period; 3. To suspend, for the same period, all processes arising out of mortgage, bond, annuity, or other contract affecting house or land; 4. To repeal the whole of the taxes on malt, hops, leather, soap and candles.

It need scarcely be added that agrarian extremism of this type, especially at a time when agricultural "distress" was notoriously

[1] *Annual Register*, 1823, History, p. 2.

abating, helped rather than hindered Ministers in Parliament since it sobered "independents" into a conviction that they might be playing with fire if they gave further encouragement to farmers' agitation.

The Session of 1823, then, went a good deal more prosperously for Ministers than many had forecast. One well-known Opposition member, Sir Robert Heron, had written thus of Castlereagh and Canning in his notes for October 1822:[1]

> Though he [Castlereagh] had not the eloquence of Pitt, yet he had acquired the perfect knowledge of the House of Commons: was daring or temperate, according to the occasion; knew when to be firm, and when to yield what he had before declared he could never be brought to relinquish.... Lord Londonderry [Castlereagh] was the constant supporter of foreign tyranny, and the bitter enemy of every liberal principle, at home or abroad. No man ever brought more calamities upon his country, unless Pitt himself; and whoever be his successor, the nation cannot but profit by his death. That successor is Canning.... Canning is become of late more cautious and moderate; yet, hated by the King and by many of his colleagues,—without much influence in the House of Commons, except that of Minister,—without any character in the country,—I see not how his elaborate and artificial eloquence, now perhaps almost exhausted is to carry him through his undertaking, most arduous as, I trust, he will find it.

It will be seen that Heron had all Opposition's prejudices in good measure, and that makes it all the more significant to find him acknowledging, during 1823, that Canning seemed to have established himself solidly in Parliament, while, in the country, comparative "apathy" had succeeded the former excitements, despite gross Governmental "treachery" to liberty in the case of Spain. Canning, however, had confirmed his supremacy in Parliament by delivering, on April 30th, and towards the end of the crucial three-days debate of the Session, a convincing justification of the activities of the Foreign Office, first, in trying to persuade the other Four Powers at Verona not to intervene in Spain; then, in endeavouring to persuade the Spain of the "Constitution of 1812" to become a less trying neighbour to France, and to offer, also, more security for the safety of the Spanish Royal Family; and, finally, in resolving not to allow calculated obstinacy at Madrid to force Britain into war with a France, that would enjoy

[1] *Notes by Sir Robert Heron, Bart.* (ed. 1851), pp. 136–7.

the moral support of all the other Great Powers.[1] But Canning owed his triumph of April 30th to more than his marked oratorical victory over Brougham or the shrewd conviction of "independents" that Opposition would have chosen exactly the opposite line of attack if Canning had allowed himself to be forced into hostilities.[2] The fact was that most Englishmen, in April 1823, considered that the French Army entering Spain to "rescue" Ferdinand VII was entering a hornet's nest and would suffer worse troubles than had overtaken Napoleon's troops. And when it slowly became obvious, during the course of the summer, that the "Liberal" Government of Spain was full of incapacity, indecision and downright treachery, most "independents" were glad not to have been committed to its support. They knew that Canning had safeguarded Britain's right to request unconditional French evacuation the moment Ferdinand VII could be held to have been restored to the free exercise of his constitutional prerogatives and they knew, too, that Canning had held the threat of recognising the independence of Spanish America, *in terrorem*, over the head of both Ferdinand VII and Louis XVIII.[3]

But after this excursion into the international field, it might be well to allow Sir Robert Heron, Opposition member for Peterborough, to summarize British politics, as he saw them in 1823. He had changed his opinion of Canning's prospects but, in August 1823, was still capable of writing thus:[4]

> This Session of Parliament began under favourable circumstances for Ministers. Canning had got rid of Sidmouth and Vansittart, who were a disgrace even to such a Cabinet; and he had also relieved himself of the unpopularity of Mr. Bragge Bathurst, in the House of Commons. Robinson, who became Chancellor of the Exchequer, made a fair and intelligible exposition; and gave some satisfaction to the country by a diminution of the taxes. Canning assumed the appearance of liberal ideas with regard to Spain, and though he was belied by the papers presented to the House, and evidently had never intended to act up to his profession; yet, this was sufficient to disarm opposition for a time, and to satisfy a people, unfortunately as little in earnest as himself, and without any just conception of the immense importance to all nations of the cause of Spain. If any further proof were wanting of the

[1] Cf. *Annual Register*, 1823, History, p. 45: "This speech was one of the happiest—in some respects, perhaps, the happiest—of Mr. Canning's efforts."
[2] *Ibid.*: "Far from reaching the excellence which Mr. Canning had exhibited, Mr. Brougham, on this occasion, fell infinitely below his ordinary level."
[3] *Ibid.*, Public Documents, p. 144.
[4] *Notes by Sir Robert Heron, Bart.*, pp. 146–7.

insincerity of Ministers on this subject, we need only look to Portugal, where a counter-revolution has taken place, which the slightest exertion of influence on their part might have prevented.... But surely, in this enlightened age, so profligate a conspiracy of Sovereigns, against all people and all political principles, can never ultimately succeed. By treachery at home, and by the astonishing apathy of all ranks in England, it appears likely to obtain a temporary success; but I will never despair of the cause of freedom.

There was obviously a good deal of the *doctrinaire* of "freedom" in Sir Robert Heron. And his account of home politics, too, is, perhaps, at fault in not explaining the "apathy" he deplored by the "prosperity" that was now spreading from industry to agriculture and restoring the day of roast-beef and plum-puddings in the farm-houses if not in the labourers' cottages.

"In the spring," wrote Heron, "Yorkshire took the lead in an effort to obtain Parliamentary Reform. Lincolnshire and many other counties followed, but we were few and ill supported. The attempt failed, and it must be owned, the people of England take but little interest in questions regarding their own rights. The House of Commons was principally occupied with an enquiry into the official conduct of Plunkett, and of an Orange Sheriff of Dublin.... In the House of Commons, however, the cause of reform is gaining ground; and, whenever the people of England exert themselves manfully, and with some unanimity for it, I shall feel pretty sanguine in my expectation of success. But the fear of radicalism, on one side, and the equivocal aid of Hunt and Cobbett on the other, at present paralyze our exertions. At Lincoln, old Cartwright attended and divided us by a radical amendment, in which I had the mortification to see him seconded by my friend Johnson. Cartwright was treated as he ought, with all the attention due to his age and character. Johnson expected success, but they had not the support of one in fifty."

There is again a good deal of interest in Heron's views as they were written down in December 1823 when he was, doubtless, preparing for the 1824 Session. He was beginning to feel much friendlier to Canning and to find, in Greece and Spanish America, considerable compensation for the setbacks of "liberty" in Spain. He was, in fact, beginning to believe that Canning would be doing much more for "liberty" if he were not held back by the Court and a section of the Cabinet, headed by Eldon.

"I inclined to believe," wrote Heron,[1] "that Canning was not unwilling to have taken proper measures with regard to the invasion

[1] *Notes by Sir Robert Heron, Bart.*, pp. 150–1.

of Spain, had he been supported by the country, against the zeal for despotism, so evident in the court and amongst his colleagues. The least vigour on our part must have been successful, for it is evident that the French long hesitated and feared to strike, until they saw our Parliament inclined to a most disgraceful neutrality. It is true, the constitutionalists in Spain made a poor defence; but what could they do when deserted by all mankind? The affairs of Greece afford some consolation: alone and unassisted, Greece has fought out her own emancipation, and if she has now any danger to fear, it is from Russia and not from Turkey.

"With regard to Spanish America, the speech of the President of the United States has put an end to all serious cause for fear; the royalists, unaided, cannot long offer essential opposition to their independence, and Europe will not now dare to interfere against them.

"Canning's internal policy is certainly far superior to anything the tories have ever given us before; let him go on in this course, and opposition will dwindle into nothing. Peace, and the present prosperity of the country, are also greatly against us. It is true, that great inroads have been made upon our liberties, the people are still virtually unrepresented, and the Catholics are yet denied the enjoyment of their rights; but gradually the latter grievance will, I think, be, at no distant period, remedied."

The praise, given by Heron to Canning's internal policy, referred, presumably, not only to Robinson's Budget but also to Peel's humanisation of the Criminal Law and to Huskisson's measures at the Board of Trade, and more especially to his Reciprocity Bill for setting aside the old Navigation Code wherever reciprocity was assured. And, in 1824, there was to be more approval, from Opposition, for the bulk of Government's policies, after a Speech from the Throne which had announced great prosperity at home, and, abroad, a considerable advance towards the recognition of the Spanish-American Republics by the dispatch to them of British consuls.[1] Robinson had another rosy Budget which permitted, both, a Conversion of the "old Four per cents" to an interest-rate of $3\frac{1}{2}$ per cent and the reduction of the duty on rum, coals, wool and raw silk; Huskisson co-operated with the Exchequer in having a number of anachronistic laws, dealing with the Silk Trade, repealed; and Peel, though asking for a two-year

[1] *Annual Register*, 1824, History, pp. 3–4: "An increasing activity pervades almost every branch of manufacture. . . . Agriculture is recovering. . . . With respect to the provinces of America which have declared their separation from Spain . . . His Majesty has appointed consuls to reside at the principal ports and places . . . for the protection of the trade of his subjects. As to any further measures, his Majesty has reserved to himself an unfettered discretion. . . ."

renewal of the Aliens Act, allowed Canning to hint to the restive Opposition that it would be the last.[1] Even on Ireland, where Opposition strongly contested the renewal of the Insurrection Act, and Hume urged attention, instead, to the excessive wealth of the Protestant State Church, Ministers agreed that the Houses should have Select Committees to investigate Irish disorders for themselves. It is hard, in fact, to decide which illustrates more the growingly "liberal" temper of the Commons at this prosperous season—the pertinacity with which Ministers were pressed to allow a general inquiry into Ireland, a pressure only defeated by 184 votes against 136, or Huskisson's welcome for Hume's plans to abolish the laws against Workmen's Combinations. One last reference shall be made to the almost unprecedented "liberalism" of the 1824 Session. It was during this Session that it was resolved to treat slave-trading as piracy and to punish it as such and that, in addition, Canning announced strict new regulations for the humane treatment of slaves which were first to be applied in Trinidad and then extended to other colonies. And, under these regulations, more was done than to prohibit the flogging of females or the separation of married slaves from one another or from their children. Important civil capacities were recognised in the slaves including the right to own property, to dispose of it by will, and to give valid evidence on oath.[2]

The 1825 Session, as will be seen, turned largely on Ireland, and on this topic Opposition had little good to say of the "Protestant" wing of the Government, hostile to Catholic Emancipation. But on all non-Irish topics Ministers, on Opposition's own admission, were generally pursuing laudable policies. There was, indeed, one very amusing exchange when Brougham claimed that Ministers were following Opposition's plans and Canning jokingly retorted that Opposition had cried out, at different times, for so many and such diverse things that there was hardly any possible line of policy whose paternity could not be claimed in this fashion,

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 57. Coming to the help of Peel, Canning said, in effect, that aliens could not expect to be allowed liberty to embroil Britain with other powers "even if this temporary bill should expire; and he trusted that expire it would, without another renewal. (This intimation being received with loud cheers, he repeated his earnest hope and expectation, that the bill would expire without another renewal)." Under the Aliens Bill foreigners might be expelled from the country by Government order.

[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 97–100.

by Government's rivals.[1] Ministers' credit, in fact, stood very high. Robinson had another very prosperous Budget, which allowed him, for example, to free houses of seven windows or less from window duty and houses of under £10 rent, per annum, from house duty.[2] Remission of these hated assessed taxes must have brought Robinson greater goodwill, at a cheaper rate, than even the reductions of duty he offered the nation on coffee, wine, British spirits, rum and cider. Peel's contribution to Government's Sessional record was a much-lauded codification into one Statute of the "Jury Laws", contained in as many as eighty-five different enactments.[3] One review of the Session, made by writers who were none too favourable to Government, ventured the opinion that, by Jury Law Codification alone—and quite apart from the further codification he was planning—Peel had made certain of a place in history.[4] They were obviously pleased that Peel had given up, freely and without pressure, the last opening for "packing" the special juries who were normally called for when the Crown brought a political prosecution in the Court of King's Bench.[5]

More important, of course, than Peel's Jury Law or even Robinson's Budget was Canning's recognition of the independence of the Colombian and Argentine Republics.[6] Many, not normally friendly to Government, were delighted at the blow that was felt to have been struck at the "cause of despotism" everywhere, at the Courts of the "Holy Alliance" no less than at that of Madrid. At the Board of Trade, meanwhile, Huskisson was undertaking

[1] *Parliamentary History and Review, 1825*, p. 39, for Canning on Brougham thus (February 3rd): "As, in the course of his Parliamentary life, the learned gent. had proposed and supported every species and degree of innovation which could be practised in a settled government, it was not very easy for Ministers to do any thing, in the affair of South America, or any other, without seeming to borrow something from the learned gent. . . . break away in what direction they would, to the left or right, it was all alike. 'Oho!' said the learned gent., 'I was there before you.'"

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 667: "Our prospects are the more encouraging, as all the liberal measures of the present Chancellor of the Exchequer have hitherto been attended with signal success.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 754, which claimed that, on one calculation, it was possible to find nearly 400 different statutes bearing on juries.

[4] *Ibid.*: "By this commencement alone, Mr. Peel has secured to himself, if we mistake not, a more certain and durable celebrity than the 'heaven-born minister' with all his wars and all his prodigality."

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 755: "It is no slight proof of the magnanimity and integrity of Mr. Peel that he has renounced this pernicious power of packing, so hardily and successfully established for the government, by the Court of King's Bench."

[6] By making the treaties with them, mentioned in the King's Speech at the opening of the Session.

changes which were at least as full of "innovation" in their sphere as anything suggested by his colleagues. Very bold measures indeed were directed against the over-protection that, in some cases, prevented British industry from obtaining the semi-manufactured materials that it needed and, in others, left it to the smuggler to introduce high-quality finished goods at great profit to himself and great loss to the Treasury. The importance of Huskisson's changes is suggested by the following selection from his list of reductions in import-duty: Iron from £6 10*s*. per ton to £1 10*s*.; Spelter from £28 per ton to £14; Copper from £54 per ton to £27; Tin from £109 5*s*. per ton to £50; Woollens from between 67½ and 50 per cent to 15 per cent *ad valorem*; Cottons from between 75 and 50 per cent to 10 per cent; Linens from between 180 and 40 per cent to 25 per cent; and Glass from 80 per cent to 20 per cent. And Huskisson was hardly apologetic in his language. Here is a sample that might have been spoken by the President of a Free Trade Club a half-century later:[1]

> If cambrics were made better at Valenciennes, was that a sufficient reason for imposing a prohibitory duty on all linens; a duty from which the revenue got next to nothing, whilst the country was full of the proscribed article? If certain descriptions of paper for engraving were made more perfect in France, were we always to be condemned to the use of an inferior and dearer article of home manufacture? The time had been, when it was found a sufficient reason for imposing a prohibitory duty upon a foreign article, that it was better than we could make at home; but he trusted when such calls were made upon the house hereafter, their first answer at least would be, "Let us see what can be done by competition—first try to imitate, and bye and bye, perhaps, you will surpass your foreign rival!" Prohibitions, in fact, were a premium upon mediocrity. They destroyed the best incentive to excellence, invention and improvement. They condemned the community, to suffer, both in price and quality, all the evils of monopoly, except in as far as a remedy could be found in the baneful arts of the smuggler.

It is time to turn to the Catholic question, the question which, as unfriendly observers put it, gave Opposition a more specious *raison d'être*, and one better calculated to win good divisions, than any other it could put forward.[2] The Catholic Question was with

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 369 (Huskisson in the Commons, Friday, March 25th).

[2] Cf. *John Bull*, August 15th: "The Roman Catholic Question is the sheet anchor, and last 'stand by', of the Whig faction—it is the *nucleus* round which

Parliament from the very first day of the Session seeing that Ministers had chosen, on alarmist representations from Ireland, to insert into the King's Speech a passage which practically asked for a prompt suppression of the Catholic Association, a body only two years old but one which, it was claimed, was both dangerous and illegal. It was illegal, according to Ministerialists, not merely because of the (Irish) Convention Act of 1793, which it had attempted to evade, but because of the way in which it had, with its tongue in its cheek, invoked Irish Catholics, "by the hate you bear the Orangemen, your natural enemies", to avoid conflict with the law. Moreover, it had appointed Committees, which appeared to assume for themselves the supervision of almost every official act in Ireland, and, latterly, in the name of Ireland's alleged six million of Catholics had taken, it was claimed, to supervising the Courts of Justice. Opposition, of course, had much to say against Government's course. No Catholic Association would have arisen, it was affirmed, if Catholic Emancipation had been granted or Orangeism had been less powerful among the magistrates and officials of the Irish Government. Since the foundation of the Catholic Association, moreover, and thanks to its invocations, outrage, it was claimed, had almost disappeared. And, finally, if the Catholic Association had once ventured to bring a Protestant to trial for the suspected murder of a Catholic, what of the Constitutional Association, financed by Government's strongest supporters, which, not satisfied with the Laws Officers' war on "blasphemy and sedition", had undertaken one of its own and with much less justification, in the circumstances, than the Catholic Association? If the Catholic Association was to be condemned for its conduct, then, it was affirmed, the Constitutional Association should be suppressed, too, as well as all the Orange Associations.[1]

The divisions on the Unlawful Societies Bill ran to the following figures: 278–123, on February 15th; 253–107, on February 21st, at Second Reading stage; and 226–96, on February 25th, at Third

they rally their greatest numbers, and their most desperate means; comprehending all ranks of discontent, even blood royal, alas! with the puddle of the Cobbetts and Hunts who care as much about 'the cause of religion' as the Devil did about holy water."

[1] This section attempts to summarise the weeks of Parliamentary oratory devoted to the passage of the Unlawful Societies Bill, introduced by Goulburn, Irish Chief Secretary, on February 10th. The Constitutional Association, from the location of its office, was often referred to in Radical literature as the "Bridge Street Gang".

Reading stage. These figures were, perhaps, hardly as good as were hoped for by Brougham who had led the attack on the Bill with great ability and determination. The fact was that there was a weighty section of Opposition which disliked and distrusted the Catholic Association and the methods it had pursued.[1] And it was this section which showed special interest in the elaborate plan that was soon being advanced to achieve a settlement of the Catholic Question, with the aid of Canning and the "liberal" wing of the Government. Entrusted as he had been with the Catholic Petition of the year, Sir Francis Burdett was suffered to introduce a Catholic Relief Bill, drafted in consultation with the various groups interested. On condition of taking an oath safeguarding the Protestant Church Establishments and recognising the Monarchy's independence of all outside authority, Catholics were to be permitted to hold all offices save the Crown, the Lord-Lieutenancy of Ireland and the Lord Chancellorship. A second Bill, entrusted to Lord Francis Leveson Gower, offered Catholics the further benefit of a State maintenance for the Catholic clergy of Ireland—£1500 a year each for four archbishops; £1000 a year each for 22 bishops; £300 a year each for 300 deans; £200 a year each for 200 of the more important parish clergy; £120 a year each for a further 800; and, finally, £60 a year each to 1000 more, to be placed, presumably, in the positions of least consequence.[2] A third Bill, in the hands of a moderate Whig, Littleton, M.P. for Staffordshire, contained the price Ireland was expected to pay to obtain the great advantages of the Catholic Relief Bill and the Catholic Clergy Bill. The multiplication of Irish faggot-voters, created in tens of thousands by political landlords who had conveyed largely fictitious forty-shilling freeholds for the purpose, was to be prevented by a law which would, in future, make the minimum qualification for the Irish county vote, a freehold of £10 per annum. It seems plain that the possibility was already foreseen that the Catholic Association, reconstructed to avoid the consequences of the Unlawful Societies Bill, might take the

[1] Cf. Sir John Sebright, M.P. for Herefordshire, who announced, on February 18th, that he "would give his support to this bill, because he felt that some measure was necessary to put down the Association. He felt, however, ashamed that the house should, at that time of day, be discussing the means of putting down an Association which could have no existence, had the Government followed a manly and decisive policy." William Lamb, the later Lord Melbourne, also spoke for the suppression of the Association.

[2] *Parliamentary History and Review, 1825*, reporting Leveson Gower on April 29th.

control of the faggot-voters out of the hands of the landlords and into its own. The mere possibility that hordes of such voters would be led to the poll, after Catholic Relief, to return the Catholic Association's leaders destroyed in advance, it was said, all the Relief Bill's chances. The return of such men was so widely feared as a likely prelude to armed clashes between Catholics and Protestants that it was hoped that the Catholic nobility and hierarchy would themselves set the example of accepting the Irish Franchise Bill in order to weaken the Parliamentary arguments against the Catholic Relief Bill and the Catholic Clergy Bill. Sir Francis Burdett, indeed, decided to vote for the measure as part of the compromise necessary to save his Catholic Relief Bill.[1]

The Relief Bill in which Burdett felt so much paternal interest had already gone a promising way, for the Second Reading division of April 19th had produced a vote of 268 against 241, a considerable improvement over the vote of 247–234 given at the beginning of March to Burdett's opening resolutions. On April 25th, the Duke of York, heir presumptive to the throne, was ill-advised enough to issue, in the House of Lords, an advance declaration of war on Catholic Relief. He implied that the Sovereign might hold himself bound, in virtue of his Coronation Oath, to veto a Catholic Emancipation Bill even after it had passed both Houses, and, in fact, he, the Duke of York pledged himself to do so if it should fall to his lot to have the decision to make. Next night, Brougham, when resisting the Irish Franchise changes as unjust and unnecessary, made, amidst roars of cheering, a sensational reply, urging that it was no time to be threatening Catholics with tremendously diminished chances of voting but rather, in view of the heir presumptive's declaration, was it the time to be passing Catholic Emancipation as soon as might be "in the present reign". The occasion was the more sensational from the fact that Brougham successfully resisted a Government attempt to silence him on a point of order, and, altogether, a quotation from the heart of the speech is more than justifiable.

"The cry has been," said Brougham,[2] "'Carry this bill—carry the disfranchisement of the forty-shilling freeholders—carry this measure,

[1] *Parliamentary History and Review, 1825*, p. 203, for Burdett on April 26th: "those freeholds had been continually represented as one of the greatest evils of the country. Be that as it might, they had obtained a boon if they could exchange them for general emancipation, which would settle the country in peace."

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 197.

not upon its own merits, but because it will carry with it the question of Catholic Emancipation.' This might have done well twenty-four hours ago—twenty-four hours back gentlemen might have expected to carry Catholic Emancipation with the help of the bill now under discussion; but what gentleman at the present moment would say that he had any hope of so carrying it (hear, hear)? The very last plea in favour of the bill before the house—the only plea that ever could have been urged for it—was gone. What pledge had he now, that even if he abandoned his duty as a senator, if he consented to legislate without investigation, to vote in the dark, where the rights and interests of thousands were concerned—what pledge had he, that he should ever receive any consideration for thus . . . betraying the important trust reposed in him (hear, hear)? Would not the ominous news of the day . . . ring through all England, and all Ireland, as the knell of despair in the ears of the Catholics (hear, hear)? . . . no monarch who ever sat upon the English throne had ever been prepared for such resistance to his people as was now not only meditated, but openly avowed against them. He (Mr. B.), therefore, gave them this warning; he appealed to Ireland and to Irish members; he did not believe that any thing would carry the great question except a powerful house. Instead of a majority of twenty-seven members, to save the empire from convulsion, he believed nothing could save Ireland and England from new troubles, but a large increase of the majority (hear, hear). Now was the time—this reign was the time (loud cheering). Yet a little while, and it would be too late. . . ."

After such language, the arrival of the Catholic Relief Bill in the House of Lords was important. It passed its Third Reading in the Commons, on May 10th, by a majority of 248 against 227, and, on May 17th, came the Second Reading debate in the Lords when Liverpool and Eldon succeeded in destroying it by a majority of 178 against 130. All the effort spent on the Irish Franchise and Catholic Clergy Bills by very considerable majorities in the Commons had been destroyed too, and it promised to become harder for Canning, Robinson, Huskisson and Plunket, Emancipationists all, to justify continuing in the same Government alongside Liverpool and Eldon. Opposition had already told them emphatically that if they wanted their professions on Catholic Emancipation to be believed, they had only to refuse to act for Liverpool and Eldon in the Commons and thus force them to capitulate or to retire.[1] Canning, who had suffered for thirteen

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 95: "Without charging them with apostacy to the cause, it was unfortunate, that when an administration could not have been formed without the rt. hon. gents. opposite, the liberal part of the cabinet should succumb, and the enlightened submit to the unenlightened (cheers and laughter). Darkness covered the land instead of that light which should gladden the heart of the country (cheers)."

years from a previous attempt to force the pace in the 1809 Cabinet, was not yet to be tempted to stake his all on a gambler's throw. But the "unenlightened" part of the Cabinet was plainly being put, in every succeeding Session, at an increasing disadvantage. And when the inevitable breach came, Opposition would have a strong case to make against buying Catholic Emancipation a place on the Statute Book by submitting to too heavy a price of counter-concessions. Hume, for example, who had, for years, been demanding an examination into the justifiability of Irish Tithes, had refused to buy security for the Irish tithe-owner by asking the general taxpayer to find £250,000 per annum for the Irish Catholic clergy.[1] Others favoured the project of finding an income for the Irish Catholic clergy but held that the proper source of that income was, not the general taxpayer, but the "superfluous revenue" of the over-endowed Episcopal Church of Ireland.[2] And as for the project of leaving 40*s*. the minimum voting freehold in England but making it £10 in Ireland, Brougham, Hume, Hobhouse and Lambton had all refused to consider it at any price, Hume and Lambton going so far as to declare that they would vote against Catholic Emancipation if it were accompanied, as a necessary condition, by Irish disfranchisement.[3]

[1] Cf. *John Bull*, June 23, 1822, for Hume's raising of the Tithe Question, and that of the total amount and distribution of Irish Church revenues, on June 19th. In a small House, Ministers were seriously worried by his demand for a Select Committee. And Hume raised the question again in 1823 and 1824. His demand for an Irish Church inquiry was raised a fourth time on June 14, 1825.

[2] *Parliamentary History and Review, 1825*, p. 207, shows Creevey, on April 29, 1825, making Hume's essential point much better than Hume himself. Here is its summary of Creevey: "Mr. Creevey said, that he would have no objection to see the Catholic clergymen properly remunerated; but would never consent to pay that remuneration out of the taxes of the Protestants of England (hear). He thought that the Catholic clergymen might easily be paid out of the funds of Ireland itself. Why should great families be allowed to send their relations and tutors to Ireland, and to quarter them upon the rich livings of that country? He never would consent to make any provision for the Catholic clergy of Ireland, unless it were made from the property of the Established Church (hear, hear)."

[3] *Ibid.*, pp. 214–15. Lambton is thus quoted: "he would much rather that the forty shilling freeholders should retain the right of voting, without the Catholic Relief Bill being passed, than that they should be disfranchised, in order that Catholic emancipation should be carried".

CHAPTER XXII

THE POLITICS OF 1826–8

From the *Notes* of Sir Robert Heron, Bart., Opposition M.P.

"1827 . . . Lord Liverpool, without talents or integrity, political at least, had by bigotry or hypocrisy, acquired a considerable reputation and influence. . . . The adoption of a more liberal system of Government proved that his power had not been very efficient for the last two years; and the disputes in the Cabinet, which could no longer be concealed, promised an important change even before matters were brought to a crisis by the apoplectic attack of Lord Liverpool. The negotiations and intrigues which followed were long; when Peel, declaring to the King that materials were wanting to form an anti-catholic Administration, his Majesty appointed Canning Prime Minister. It is evident that he has made to the King promises which are not in unison with the real interests of the country; and which he relies on time and occasion to get rid of. For some time, his situation was not enviable; almost all the former Ministers having resigned, and the portion of the Opposition, which afterwards united itself to him, having long delayed to do so; the whole of us, however, are anxious to support him, less from personal reliance on his character, than from an earnest desire to exclude those who are opposed to him. Brougham outstepped us far, and instantly threw himself into the arms of Canning: the latter, in the mean time, prosecuted his plans with a good deal of cunning, and, at length, succeeded in forming a strong administration; strong in the support of the whigs, and satisfactory from his entire dependence on that support.

"*March* 1828. The new Administration is the Duke of Wellington, and Wellington alone. Peel disappoints his friends . . . and Huskisson's character is gone; but, hitherto, Wellington appears to be no longer the holy alliance tory; like Canning, one may hope he has seen the necessity of acting on better principles: they are pledged to make the finance committee effective. . . . The violent jobbers, such as Bathurst, Herries, Eldon, Westmoreland, Melville, &c., are either out of office, or in places where they are in a great measure harmless; and the King, who under Lord Goderich was every thing, will now, we may hope, possess but little power.

"*December* 1, 1828. No one knows the Duke of Wellington's intentions with regard to Catholic Emancipation; yet the alarm amongst the intolerants gives hope. . . . Does he meet with difficulties in the closet? He is the man to conquer them. It is clear that no opposition to their just claims can long be successful."

THE tide of industrial prosperity, on which Ministers had been floated into calmer waters after 1821, began to recede in the autumn of 1825. "Prosperity", unfortunately, had resulted not merely from the genuine growth of demand for British goods in a world recovering from the Napoleonic Wars but also from a great deal of wild speculation and rascally company-promoting. Some of the Spanish-American mining companies floated, for example, represented a veritable conspiracy hatched against the British public by stockbrokers and Spanish-American "patriots" of the most dubious hue. There were loan-flotations which were little better, and the speed with which the proceeds of a notorious "Greek Loan", encouraged by all the "Liberals" of Europe, vanished between the fingers of "Liberal" bankers and Greek "patriots" justified all the cynicism of the conservative.[1] One estimate of the amount found in London, during 1825, for foreign loans was £11,304,623, and much of it went to ephemeral governments in Brazil, Mexico, Guadalajara, Peru, Guatemala, and Greece. The total for commercial flotations at home and abroad was £17,582,773 and much of this, even at home, passed into the pockets of the plausible rascals who engineered such premature flotations as the Great Westminster Dairy, the Welsh Slate, Copper, and Lead Company, and the Imperial Distillery.[2] A large part in stimulating all this over-speculation was played by the numerous small banks of the day which provided the finance both by advancing their clients' money and issuing bank-notes without adequate cover. Accordingly when the boom gave way to decline and finally to collapse, the situation became doubly serious from the number of banks that began failing all over the country. The winter of 1825–6 was a nerve-racking time even for relatively solid banks and merchants, and the rapid growth of unemployment and distress hardly needs much special explanation. And when

[1] Cf. *Annual Register*, 1826, History, pp. 371–5, for the revelations which were eventually made of the "petty meanness and manœuvring", not merely of the Greek deputies but of Hume, Ellice, Bowring, and Messrs. Ricardo who "filled the newspapers with letters of palliation or recrimination". Though the full story was not known for some time, the Stock Exchange must have guessed much, for Greek loan fell very steeply, and would doubtless have become worthless had it not been for the growing prospect of Anglo-Russian intervention on behalf of the Greeks.

[2] *Ibid.*, 1825, Public Documents, pp. 48–50, for a list of the flotations of the year. Long as the list is, it represents only a part of the attempted flotations.

machine-smashing began again, as it did, during 1826,[1] there is, perhaps, less need to explain why Ministers devoted much of their Parliamentary effort, in the Session begun on February 2nd, to persuading members to consent to the Corn Law modifications which would prevent bread from rising in price.

It was during this Session of 1826 that it became clear that Robinson, Chancellor of the Exchequer, was a much lesser figure than Huskisson, who showed altogether greater intrepidity and enterprise in the difficult circumstances of the day. This is not the place to go into detail on the Currency and Banking debates that made an important part of the Session in view of the disputes that were raging as to what had really brought about the bank-failures and what might be expected to provide a remedy. But Huskisson also showed exceptional firmness and decision in meeting with a total negative the efforts of shipowners and the silk-industry to take advantage of the distress in order to re-establish the monopoly conditions prevailing before 1823.[2] He was just as decided in turning his face against projects which would have made it difficult or impossible to promote Joint-Stock Companies in the future because of the scandals that had attended the promotion of such Companies during the gambling fever of 1824 and 1825. As Huskisson was later to point out to the House, England's most characteristic achievements in industry and public works had been made possible by Joint-Stock Companies, while, in the Banking debates, members themselves had almost unanimously agreed to ask the Bank of England to give up such of its Charter privileges as prevented the establishment of Joint-Stock Banks in districts more than sixty-five miles from the capital. Such Joint-Stock Banks, it had been hoped, would have a far more solid capital basis than some of the private banks which had failed, and other joint-stock enterprises, too, if the House would refrain from panic legislation and the public from greedy speculation, would yet

[1] Cf. *Annual Register*, 1826, Chronicle, pp. 63–8, under date, April 24th, and under heading "Disturbances in Lancashire". The conclusion is this: "The total number of looms destroyed is estimated at 1000, and their value at £30,000."

[2] Cf. *Ibid.*, History, pp. 64–5: "The ship owners, and others connected with the shipping interests, . . . complained equally with the silk-manufacturers, of the mischievous consequences of innovation. . . . Mr. Huskisson . . . did not think it wise or becoming to allow the session to terminate . . . without showing how groundless these representations were . . . he . . . [made] a very elaborate, detailed, and masterly speech, displaying a most accurate knowledge of every part of his subject, and great power of stating it luminously to others." The speech was made on May 12th.

bring untold advantages to the public.[1] It is, perhaps, already plain, even before discussing Huskisson's part in the Corn Law resolutions of 1826 or mentioning the current rumour that he wrote Canning's financial speeches, why his colleagues pressed upon Parliament a plan for raising the consequence of the President of the Board of Trade and increasing his salary to £5000 a year. And Opposition, though showing good cause to resist the particular plan, offered, through the mouth of several of its leaders, to agree to a salary of £5000 a year for such a man as Huskisson.[2]

If Opposition had publicly to applaud Huskisson's unique knowledge of the general commercial situation and his "liberal" views on general commercial policy, his particular Corn Law suggestions for 1826 were actually too "liberal" for those Opposition sections most closely attached to the "agricultural interest". As finally passed through Parliament against considerable "landed" opposition on both sides of the House, a large amount of corn, already in bond, was to be released immediately on payment of a duty, in the case of wheat, of 10*s*. per quarter and, in addition, Ministers were to have the power, during the Parliamentary Recess, of admitting 500,000 quarters at such prices and rates of duty as to them seemed proper. Nor was this all, for Huskisson had pledged himself, in the near future, "to take the first favourable opportunity of calling the attention of the House to the whole system of the Corn Laws". This was something too "liberal" not merely for the Duke of York and Lord Chancellor Eldon, who were barely kept from open opposition in the Lords, but for some distinguished Opposition figures in the Commons.[3] Yet it certainly allowed Ministers to go into the General Election of the summer of 1826 with great confidence and even permitted the anti-Catholic wing of Government supporters to make some gains wherever Church and Chapel could be united in a strong feeling

[1] *Hansard's Parliamentary Debates*, December 5, 1826, Huskisson.

[2] *Annual Register*, 1826, History, pp. 107 et sqq., for the proceedings of the 6th and 7th of April summarised. It contains the following: "Mr. Calcraft, Mr. A. Baring, Mr. Abercromby, and Sir John Newport, all acknowledged, that the proposed remuneration was well deserved, and they would be glad to see a vote to that effect carried unanimously through the House, to mark the sense universally entertained of the great public services of the present President of the Board of Trade."

[3] Cf. *Notes by Sir Robert Heron, Bart.*, under September 1826, for the views of one of them who considered that "corn has never of late borne a high price" and that the Ministerial Corn programme, in the circumstances, lacked justification.

against Popery and the remodelled Catholic Association. Here is a contemporary picture of the 1826 Election from the pen of Sir Robert Heron, Opposition M.P. for Peterborough:[1]

It was supposed, that the want of money and the precarious state of the King's health, would diminish the anxiety for seats in Parliament. It turned out otherwise, and I believe there were never so many contests, or so many changes. The most important questions are, whether Canning and the Catholic question are gainers by the dissolution. The Catholic question has certainly lost a few in England, but I hope has gained rather more in Ireland. Canning must, I think, be considerably stronger by the change; but the approaching change of the Heir Apparent will, probably, contribute to strengthen both. My colleague, Scarlett, who has in general the worst information of any man I know, told us that Cobbet, Waller [Wooler], Hunt, and Wilkes, would certainly be in the new Parliament. The last is returned, but so disgraced that he can do nothing; the three former are excluded. Sir F. Burdett too hastily engaged to subscribe to bring in Cobbet; and as his subscription was likely to produce many more, it is surprising, that, with this assistance, he did not succeed; but his conduct, as a candidate, was violent and odious; he did not even show in that situation any marks of talent. Burdett, with whom I remonstrated for subscribing, told me he wished to see him in Parliament because he thought it would expose him in his true colours; and I cannot but think he was a little seduced by the magnanimity of forgetting his personal treachery to him. I, in some measure, shared the first of these reasons for wishing to see Cobbet returned to Parliament.

The new Parliament was called together on November 14th, a good deal earlier than usual. One reason for the change was that Ministers had decided, during a temporary corn-alarm, to go beyond the special powers conferred upon them by the last Parliament and so needed an Act of Indemnity to cover their proceedings. But, as matters turned out, the fact, that Parliament was assembled in November and December, enabled Canning to take, with great *éclat*, a strong but popular step in foreign policy. The death of John VI of Portugal, in the previous March, had precipitated new Peninsular troubles. Pedro, John's elder son, preferring to retain his Brazilian Empire, had made over the Portuguese throne to an infant daughter whom he had provided with a Regency and a "liberal" Constitution. Pedro's actions were by no means to the taste of a strong party in Portugal which proclaimed his younger brother, Miguel, King and sought and

[1] *Notes by Sir Robert Heron, Bart.*, pp. 161–2.

obtained help from Ferdinand VII of Spain and, it was suspected, from the French forces still supporting his throne. The "constitutional" Government of Portugal appealed to Britain, and after his experience of Ferdinand's duplicity, Canning resolved on action which should prevent "tyranny" and French influence from establishing themselves in Portugal as they had done in Spain. On December 12th, Canning asked Parliament to approve the dispatch of troops and ships to the Tagus in aid of the Portuguese Government and made a celebrated oration. The heartiest applause came, not from Government benches, but from among Opposition, and Brougham especially gave glowing praise when making it plain that Hume could not rely on his support for an "economy" amendment.

"I was certainly one of those," Brougham declared,[1] "who held some years ago that we were under severe recognisances to keep the peace. I know the severity of the burthens under which this country labours; but if I feel their weight, if I feel apprehensive (as who must not?) of their effect, in case this most necessary measure should unhappily fail, I cannot but rely on those sound, enlightened, liberal, and truly English principles—principles worthy of our best times and of our most distinguished statesmen—which now govern this country in her foreign policy, and inspire the eloquence of the Right Honourable Secretary with a degree of fervour, energy, and effect extraordinary and unprecedented in this House—unprecedented (I can give it no higher praise) even in the eloquence of the Right Honourable gentleman."

And the effect of it all was heightened when Canning, replying himself to the Hume amendment, made another great speech explaining why, in 1823, on the occasion of the French entry into Spain, he had applied himself not to fan the blaze of British anger but rather to damp it down.

"It would be disingenuous, indeed," exclaimed Canning,[2] "not to admit that the entry of the French army into Spain was, in a certain sense, a disparagement—an affront to the pride, a blow to the feelings, of England:—and it can hardly be supposed that the government did not sympathise, on that occasion, with the feelings of the people. But I deny, that, questionable or censurable as the act might be, it was one which necessarily called for our direct and hostile opposition. Was nothing then to be done? Was there no other mode of resistance, than

[1] Cf. *Hansard's Parliamentary Debates*, December 12, 1826.
[2] *Annual Register*, 1826, History, pp. 203–4; *Hansard's Parliamentary Debates.*

a direct attack upon France...? What, if the possession of Spain might be rendered harmless in rival hands—harmless as regarded us—and valueless to the possessors?... If France occupied Spain, was it necessary, in order to avoid the consequences of that occupation—that we should blockade Cadiz? No. I looked another way—I sought materials of compensation in another hemisphere. Contemplating Spain, such as our ancestors had known her, I resolved that if France had Spain, it should not be Spain 'with the Indies'. I called the New World into existence, to redress the balance of the Old.

"Once more I declare, that the object of the address, which I propose is not war: its object is to take the last chance of peace. If you do not go forth, on this occasion to the aid of Portugal, Portugal will be trampled down, to your irretrievable disgrace:—and then will come war in the train of national degradation. If, under circumstances like these, you wait till Spain has matured her secret machinations into open hostility, you will have in a little while the sort of war required by the pacificators: [Hume's defensive war] and who shall say where that war will end?"

Canning's motion was, of course, carried almost unanimously, the House of Commons adjourned until February 8th, and the troops went out to Portugal. By the time Parliament came together again one considerable change had come over the political scene, for the Duke of York, heir presumptive, was dead. Canning, moreover, had caught a serious chill at the funeral ceremony and was unable to appear in Parliament for some time. To make matters worse, Lord Liverpool, Head of the Government, was struck down by paralysis on February 17th.[1] It was an inauspicious beginning for Parliamentary proceedings which included such ticklish business as decisions to make on Catholic Emancipation and a new Corn Law. Canning, however, aware that a Premiership might be at stake, struggled to Westminster, on March 1st, in order, himself, to present Government's new Corn proposals to admit wheat, duty-free, when the price was 70*s.* or over, to keep it out when the price was under 60*s.*, and to have a sliding-scale of duty when the price rose and fell between 60*s.* and 70*s.* It was plain that the landed interest did not care for a plan which admitted foreign wheat, duty-free, at 70*s.*, and a struggle seemed certain despite Canning's claim that the stricken Lord Liverpool had approved and almost originated the plan. On March 5th and 6th, came the great Catholic debate of the year and though Canning intervened with all his power, he had the chagrin of

[1] *John Bull*, February 18th.

finding the House refuse to take Catholic relief into consideration by a majority of 276 against 272. On March 8th, too, in Committee on the Corn resolutions, 160 votes were raised, against the Government's 229, for substituting 64*s*. as the minimum home price to be ruling, instead of 60*s*., before foreign corn was to be allowed in on payment of a duty of 20*s*. Meanwhile a campaign against a Canning Premiership had begun, and *John Bull* had asserted that "he is not a fit person to be placed at the head of the Government".[1] Soon *John Bull* went farther, and inserted reports like the following:[2]

> The most confident statements are made that Mr. Canning has virtually resigned office, and that during the Easter Recess an arrangement will be completed by which Mr. Peel, elevated to the Peerage will be placed at the head of the Government. . . . One thing is certain, (and we have proofs of the fact before us from all parts of the country) that the *liberal* system has excited a powerful spirit of opposition to those by whom it has been adopted; and the hope that it may be corrected *in time* has created no equivocal expression of popular feeling wherever the change to which we have just alluded has been rumoured. In addition to other circumstances which render such an event highly probable, we lament to mention the continued illness of Mr. Huskisson.

John Bull was a power, but there were greater powers who hated the "liberal quackeries" of Free Trade, Catholic Emancipation and Portuguese Constitution for which Canning was deemed to be showing such an affection. Yet George IV finally flinched before the dangerous work of passing over Canning, and on April 12th it could be announced in the Commons that he had been appointed First Lord of the Treasury. The whole "Protestant" section of the Cabinet, thereupon, retired, declining to serve under a Prime Minister, pledged to Catholic Emancipation. But if some had hoped that the "Protestant" demonstration would destroy the Canning Government at birth, they were doomed to disappointment.[3] Canning showed considerable adroitness in collecting a Ministry and in having it recognised that, "respectable" as it was, a far stronger Ministry was in prospect when negotiations with

[1] *Ibid.*, February 25, 1827. [2] *Ibid.*, March 11th.

[3] Cf. *Ibid.*, April 15th: "we have to announce the resignations of his Grace, the Duke of Wellington, the Earl of Eldon, Mr. Peel, the Earl of Westmorland, Earl Bathurst, Lord Melville, and Lord Bexley. . . . The Attorney General has resigned, as have also the Lord Chamberlain, the Vice-Chamberlain, and the Master of the Horse. . . . In the subordinate offices numerous resignations have naturally taken place. . . ."

the Whigs were completed. What, in fact, was in prospect was made plain on May 1st when Parliament reassembled, and Brougham, Sir Robert Wilson, Burdett and Tierney led much of the ex-Opposition on to the Government side of the House, behind Canning, leaving their old benches to be occupied by the "Protestants". Soon, despite the objections of Lord Grey, three Whig representatives entered the Cabinet in the persons of Tierney and Lords Lansdowne and Carlisle while others accepted honours or minor appointments. By the time the Session ended on July 9th, there certainly seemed a fair prospect that a "liberal System" had been inaugurated with possibly startling results for the national future. The fact that, to Canning's intense irritation, the Duke of Wellington had chosen to destroy Government's Corn Law proposals in the Lords, appeared only to strengthen the prospects of a new "system" since it considerably widened the breach between Canning and his former colleagues.[1] And the very general welcome and support given to the Canning Government by the Press of the capital was another factor which favoured the advent of a "liberal system".[2] Discussion had even begun of the possibility of creating a large batch of new peerages in order that the House of Lords might cease to be a weapon in the hands of Canning's opponents.[3]

John Bull voiced the alarm of those who feared the advent of a "new system" in passages like the following:

> . . . we assert that the real power of the Government is in the hands of a confederacy between Radicals and the rump of the Whigs, nominally supporting, but really directing Mr. Canning—that the former are in truth the governing power . . . while Mr. Canning alone commands the ear of the King, and has the disposal of all the patronage of the State; and exercises its influence in a greater degree than it has

[1] Cf. *Memoirs of the Court of George IV*, ii, 325–6: "On the 12th of June, on Lord Goderich moving to bring up the Report of the Committee on the Corn Laws, Ministers were again left in a minority of eleven upon which they abandoned the Bill; not, however, without an explanation from the First Lord of the Treasury, who, in one of his sparkling speeches delivered in the House of Commons on the 18th, sought to throw ridicule on the Duke of Wellington."

[2] *John Bull*, May 13, 1827: "the London Press, with very few exceptions, is devoted to the cause of the heterogeneous mixture, which Mr. Canning is endeavouring to force down our throats".

[3] Cf. *Ibid.*, May 20th: "we cannot imagine how a statement should have rung from one end of the town to the other, that fifteen Peers were to be created, or transplanted, or raised, unless something had occurred to justify it; or how the names of Warrender, Binning, Baring, Russell of Brancepeth, and half a score more should have been bandied about the streets . . . if somebody had not arranged the list".

been exercised by any Minister in modern times.... Ask Lord Goderich who it is that appoints the governors of the colonies, and even down to the lowest offices in the colonies? MR. CANNING. Ask Lord Dudley who appoints the ambassadors, and ministers, and attachés, down even to the lowest clerk in the Foreign Department? MR. CANNING. Ask Lord Anglesea who appointed the members of the Board of Ordnance? MR. CANNING. We know that he has the Navy and Army, and even the King's household under his imperious control.... No minister was ever trusted with such power; but we shall see that, although he is and must be considered solely responsible for the exercise of this power, the real moving authority is a faction ... led by Brougham, Burdett, Wilson, and others who will insist upon regulating his measures....

There were other alarmist passages which declared that the "new system" would not only abolish Protestant Ascendancy and establish a Catholic problem of the gravest kind but would proceed to Parliamentary Reform and a campaign against the House of Lords.[1] Whether or not *John Bull* really believed in the spectres it was attempting to call up, Canning's unexpected death, on August 8th, certainly ended the prospect of establishing, in the words of "his sanguine friends", "political changes of the highest human importance".[2] But the political position that Canning had established for himself was so strong that the King resolved to allow the Government which he had collected to continue under Lord Goderich who, as Robinson, Chancellor of the Exchequer, had acquired some national reputation. Goderich, as is well known, proved totally lacking in the resolute temper and firm will necessary in a Prime Minister, newly appointed in difficult circumstances, and allowed himself to be forced into a succession of difficulties by a third-rate Tory politician, Herries, now hardly remembered. The King, who had now no Canning to fear, successfully pushed Herries for the Chancellorship of the Exchequer, and Herries vetoed, time after time, the project of making some counter-concession to the Whigs by admitting Brougham to high legal office and inviting Lord Holland to become Foreign Secretary. *John Bull*,

[1] Cf. *The State of the Nation* supplement, issued gratis, with the *John Bull* number of June 3, 1827: "Never was the country at any period of its history since the period of the Revolution, in a state of such fearful danger as in the present moment. There have been disgraceful intrigues, corrupt statesmen, and dangerous conspiracies."

[2] *Memoirs of the Court of George IV*, ii, 326.

[3] Cf. *John Bull*, October 14th, which gives the King the prime credit for the veto on the new Whig appointments.

in fact, speedily came forward with the suggestion that in a Europe, taken dangerously nearer a general war by such a disastrous consequence of Canningite "liberalism" as the pro-Greek preparations against Turkey, it was high time to put British policy into the hands of the Duke of Wellington.

By December 1827, the Goderich Government, if Government it can be called, was breaking up under the strain of dealing with Herries, on the one hand, and Whig grievances on the other. Goderich resigned at least once during December but was persuaded to go on rather than inconvenience the King who, if he complained of the weakness of his Government, was still making ample use of it by taking more and more of the patronage into his own hands. Early in January 1828 the approach of the new Parliamentary Session caused Goderich fresh anxiety, for his position in the Lords seemed hopeless and a new dispute had broken out between Herries, on the one hand, and Huskisson, backed by the Whigs, on the other. It was, doubtless, when describing his increasing difficulties to the King that Goderich burst into the tears recounted by the gossips and was requested to send the Lord Chancellor to the Palace.[1] The result of the interview between the Chancellor and the Monarch was a summons to the Duke of Wellington to form a Government, and the Duke's resolve, in order to retain the Canningites if not the Whigs, to refrain from turning his back completely on the "liberalism" of Canning. By January 19th, Greville was noting down in his *Memoirs* the following developments:[2]

> The first thing to be done by the Duke was to negotiate with Huskisson . . . and for many days the question was whether Huskisson would join or not, the Whigs of course most anxious he should refuse, the new Government ready to make great concessions to tempt him to join them. He has acceded, however, but much to the disgust of many of his friends, some of whom think he has behaved shabbily in abandoning the Whigs, who supported him, and who had supported Canning at his utmost need. . . . At present the exact terms of his bargain are not known. . . . If the Tories have agreed to those measures (except the Catholic question, for that is to remain on its old footing) which he deems necessary, and of which he is the author—that is, of Free Trade &c.—he would probably rather act with them than with

[1] Spencer Walpole's *History*, ii, 467, epitomises rumour thus, on the basis of the Memoir writers: "Goody Goderich began to cry, and his Majesty offered him his pocket-handkerchief."

[2] *Greville Memoirs*, under January 19, 1828.

the Whigs; and in joining Government he is liable to no reproach but that of having shaken off his Whig colleagues too easily.

Much subsequent history would, doubtless, have been different if Huskisson and the Canningites had found themselves able to stay in the new Government. But Huskisson was in a situation of peculiar discomfort, surrounded by reproaches from Canning's family, from the Whigs and from those who reminded him of the Leadership of the Commons, lost to Peel, and he soon felt the need of taking the first opportunity of justifying himself. In view of his nominal promotion from the Presidency of the Board of Trade to the Secretaryship of State for the Colonies, Huskisson had to go through re-election procedure at Liverpool, and on February 5th he made a speech there which gave violent offence to the straiter Tories. He urged in his own defence that:[1]

> . . . if the Government was such as satisfied the view I took of the interests of the country, and provided such arrangements were made in its construction as afforded a guarantee that the principles I approved should not be departed from, I was not precluded from joining it. . . . The presence in office of such men as Lord Dudley, Lord Palmerston, Mr. Grant, and Mr. Lamb is the most satisfactory of all guarantees that the general principles of our foreign and commercial system would remain unchanged, and that Ireland would be governed with the strictest impartiality in respect to the Catholic question.

To angry Tories this seemed to be a claim that Huskisson and his friends had forced "guarantees" for all the principles of "liberalism", and the Duke of Wellington thought fit to declare in Parliament that the report of Huskisson's speech must have been an incorrect one, for all that he was purported to have said about the guarantee was untrue.[2] It was hardly a happy start in the experiment of reassociating Canningites with "Protestants" but, as both parties were prepared to pass it over, Government did not break up quite so soon as Opposition would have hoped. Opposition, however, had reason to be elated at one remarkable success it enjoyed in its independent efforts at "reform" for, after Lord John Russell had carried a motion in the Commons, on February 26th, for a repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts on behalf of the Protestant Dissenters, all attempts to organise the destruction of the

[1] *Huskisson's Collected Speeches*, iii, 673.
[2] *Greville Memoirs*, under February 25, 1828.

resulting Bill broke down even in the Lords.[1] Peel had been, perhaps, too dexterous in securing the addition to Russell's Bill of provisions safeguarding the Church by imposing upon the members of every corporation and, at the pleasure of the Crown, upon the holder of every office, a declaration that they would "never exert any power or any influence to injure the Protestant" Established Church. Peel's declaration cut the ground from under the feet of Lord Eldon, who was plotting with some of the Bishops for the Bill's destruction in the Lords. Yet the Anglican-Dissenter alliance against Catholic Emancipation, which Peel was possibly calculating upon, proved a vain hope for many reasons.

Inside the Cabinet, meantime, tension was developing on a number of subjects. The Duke's views on Greece, Portugal and Navarino were a long way from "liberal"; the necessity of framing a new Corn Law all but broke up the Government;[2] and the three nights of debate on Burdett's Catholic resolution renewed all the old strains especially when the pro-Catholics were victorious by 272 votes against 266. But the fatal strain came on yet another subject of division, the disposal of the seats for the boroughs of Penryn and East Retford, boroughs which had admittedly been the scene of gross and apparently incurable corruption during the General Election of 1826. "Liberal" policy, as vainly advocated, during 1821, in the case of Grampound, was to use the opportunity to find members for the large unrepresented towns and, as the transfer of Grampound's seats to Leeds had been suggested in 1821, so Penryn's seats were now claimed for Manchester and East Retford's for Birmingham.[3] Huskisson held himself to be committed to at least one such transfer, and Peel, after the revelations of gross corruption that had been made, had allowed a Bill to transfer Penryn's members to Manchester to pass the Commons and to be sent to the Lords. There it seemed certain to be destroyed, and so, on May 19th, Huskisson resolved that it was his duty to support the plan of giving East Retford's members to Birmingham though it had been part of Peel's compromise formula

[1] Opposition's victory on this occasion represented a victory over both sections of Government combined, for Huskisson had taken the view that the Annual Indemnity Acts removed all substantial Dissenting grievances.

[2] Cf. Bulwer's *Palmerston*, i, 245.

[3] Penryn had been investigated before in 1807 and 1819, and, at East Retford, voters expected twenty guineas from each of the successful candidates they had helped to seat. Yet it must be admitted that the boroughs in question were not so much blacker than a score of others as more unfortunate in being found out.

that East Retford's seats should in future go, according to some weight of precedent, to the whole hundred in which East Retford lay.[1] And after having voted against his nominal leader and taken Palmerston and Lamb with him, Huskisson sat down at two in the morning to write the Prime Minister an offer of resignation. It is plain from the events of the next few days that Huskisson's letter was only a gesture and that he expected to be asked to continue, perhaps, with some flattering intimations of his indispensability. But the Duke, seeing a chance of forcing Huskisson out, perhaps isolated from his friends, refused to give it up and Huskisson left the Government much against his will. But he was followed out of the Cabinet by Lord Palmerston, Lord Dudley, and Charles Grant while William Lamb, Irish Chief Secretary, also threw up his appointment. The High Tories might, for the moment, exult at this wholesale departure of "liberalism" from English Government but events proved that they did not see very far. Yet the wisest politician could hardly have foreseen, for example, what was to develop from Wellington's nomination of Vesey Fitzgerald, "Catholic" M.P. for County Clare, as President of the Board of Trade in place of Charles Grant.

Ireland had been particularly affected by the constant political changes that had followed on Liverpool's collapse some sixteen months back. The appointment of Canning as Prime Minister, attended as it had been by the departure of all the strongest "Protestants" in the Government, had raised a tempest of joy in Catholic Ireland. How dangerously explosive that joy was may be instanced from the following piece of oratory by Sheil, co-founder of the Catholic Association with O'Connell and, by some, accounted the greater speaker:[2]

> Peel is out—Bathurst is out—Westmorland is out—Goulburn (but he is not worth mention) is out—Wellington, *the bad Irishman* . . . is out—and thanks be to God, the hoary champion of every abuse—the venerable supporter of corruption in all its forms—the pious antagonist of every generous sentiment—the virtuous opponent of every liberal amelioration—the immaculate senator who wept over the ruins of Grampound—ELDON, *procrastinating, canting, griping, whining, weeping, ejaculating, protesting, money-getting, and money-keeping* ELDON *is out* . . .

[1] Bulwer's *Palmerston*, i, 250–79, gives a very full account of the Penryn and East Retford controversy in the Cabinet and in Parliament. It is largely in the words of Palmerston's own *Journal*.

[2] *John Bull*, May 13th. The italics are, of course, *John Bull*'s which claimed also that Sheil apparently intended to be moderate.

better than the *presumption* of Wellington, the narrow-heartedness of Bathurst, the *arrogance* of Westmoreland, *the ostentatious manliness* and elaborate honesty of Mr. Peel, we have got rid of Lord John Eldon's tears (Loud cheers). *The old Hypocrite! . . . The whole empire rejoices at his fall.*

Soon O'Connell was prophesying the enactment of Catholic Emancipation in 1828, and when the beginning of that year brought, instead, the return to power of Wellington and Peel and the consent of the Canningites to work with them, the explosive possibilities of the Irish situation grew markedly. Then came the departure of the Canningites from the Wellington Government, and the by-election in County Clare. After some brief search for a Protestant candidate, prepared to adopt the Catholic Association's cause, the Association resolved on putting up Daniel O'Connell against Vesey Fitzgerald. There was no legal obstacle to his nomination as a candidate or, apparently, to his return by the Sheriff as the duly elected representative of the county. And to satisfy those timid freeholders, who might seek refuge from the danger of crossing their landlords by urging the uselessness of voting for one who could not take his seat, it was even thought fit to publish a case arguing O'Connell's perfect right to a seat if he took the Parliamentary Oath in the form most binding on his conscience.[1]

Though all the landlords in the county threw their influence behind Fitzgerald, who was, besides, a popular landlord himself with a long record of voting in favour of Catholic Emancipation, it soon became obvious that the priests and the Catholic Association were successfully mobilising the whole of the Catholic community's voting power against him. Moreover, the imagination of all Catholic Ireland was powerfully seized by the reports soon coming from Clare of priests and voters preparing to march together to the county town of Ennis and of the great and confident Catholic multitude subsequently collected there.[2] Fitzgerald's

[1] *Annual Register*, 1828, History, p. 123: "To get rid of the objection against electing a man who could not sit—an objection which was within the comprehension even of the cultivator of a potatoe garden—Mr. O'Connell was rash enough to pledge his professional character as a lawyer, not merely that, as a Catholic, he was capable of being elected—which was true—but that he could sit and vote in the House of Commons without taking the oaths. Mr. Butler, a Catholic English conveyancer and barrister, published an elaborate opinion to the same effect."

[2] Cf. T. Macnevin's *Speeches of Rt. Hon. R. L. Sheil*, p. 53, for one scene: "Mass being finished, Father Murphy threw his vestments off, and without

hustings speech of June 30th was almost a confession of failure in advance though he still thought fit to hint darkly at the consequences that normally followed a "serious difference" between a landlord and his tenant.[1] O'Connell's speech was full of confidence:[2]

"The time is come," said he, "when the system which has been pursued towards this country must be put a stop to. It will not do for the future to say, 'Sweet friend, I wish you well,' but it must be shown by acts that they do wish us well. It is time that this system should be put an end to, and I am come here to put an end to it. The right hon. gentleman has boasted of the support he has received from most of the gentry of the county. He has the support of some of our friends, it is true, and of all our enemies—not one portion of the filthy press but affords him their support. Oh! there is nothing makes the iron enter my soul so much as the air of patronage with which our claims are taken under the wing of a great patron; but the time when we could be trampled upon with impunity is gone by. We do not now, as we were wont to do, bend our neck before our masters.... Send in the right hon. gentleman, and he will calculate how much hock and champaigne he expended in entertaining his colleagues in office. Perceval it was who first raised the 'No Popery' cry; and every man who supported the base, bloody and unchristian Perceval, is as guilty of the deed he committed as that infamous minister himself.... If you send me to Parliament I will put an end to the horrid tax for building Protestant Churches, and providing sacramental wine. I will vote for the diminution of tithes. I will vote for a reform in parliament; and, finally, I will vote for reconsidering the abominable measure of the Union. Be true to each other, and to me, and we must succeed. Make way for Mr. Fitzgerald's freeholders as you would for mine; but go round the country and tell his voters that they ought to vote for me—scatter through the country, and do that manfully for me. I have taken the oath of allegiance to my king, and will keep it; but I must tell the right hon. gentleman that the young blood of Ireland is in a ferment. I detected a boy of 13 years of age a few days since drilling a regiment of boys."

After O'Connell had won the election with 2057 votes against 982 and the Sheriff, on legal advice and after hearing counsel, had

laying down the priest, assumed the politician. He addressed the people in Irish, and called upon them to vote for O'Connell in the name of their country and of their religion.... The close of his speech was peculiarly effective. He became inflamed by the power of his emotions."

[1] Cf. *Annual Register*, 1828, History, p. 126: "When the day arrives, said he, and arrive I fear it will, when a serious difference will take place between the landed proprietor and his tenant ... is it the payment of a few pounds that can compensate the tenant for the total alienation of his landlord?"

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 127.

sent in a return declaring him elected, Catholic Ireland went nearly wild with joy. Just at this juncture, too, the Unlawful Societies Bill of 1825 ran out, having been passed as a three-years Act, and the old Catholic Association, reconstituted at once, began a more ambitious programme than ever, arranging the setting up of a hierarchy of Village and County Clubs which it was aimed to assemble together, on suitable occasions, as Provincial Aggregate Meetings. The alarmed Protestants counter-organised by reviving their Orange Associations or founding new Brunswick clubs, and bloodshed, on a large scale, seemed fast approaching, in September, when Lawless, the most provocative of the Catholic orators, entered Ulster in order to organise the Catholics of that province on the approved Association models.[1] The longer heads among the Catholics recognised that an outbreak of violence, attributable to Catholic provocation, would cause a most dangerous reaction in Britain, and Lawless's mission was abandoned while O'Connell, with great emphasis, advised the most scrupulous adherence to the law. That the Catholics were in danger of losing a winning position, in which Ministers themselves, as shown by the speech of Dawson, Peel's brother-in-law and Treasury Secretary,[2] had begun considering concession, was evidenced by autumn events in England. There, the most important public meeting that had taken place for years revealed a great and vehement majority against concession to the Association, and this, despite a very wide variety of pro-Catholic advocates. A full description of the County of Kent meeting at Penenden Heath, on October 24th, cannot here be given though it was attended by over 20,000 persons. But Lord Camden, speaking in favour of the Catholics, was hissed; Lord Darnley, on the same side, was assailed with cries of "Old prosy", "Stuff and nonsense", and "Don't twaddle all day"; and Lord Teynham, another pro-Catholic peer, was denounced as "an old fool" and ended his speech amid "vociferations". Sheil, who had come especially from Ireland, was almost continuously shouted down, and no better fate attended Cobbett and Hunt. Against Cobbett the clamour is reported to have been "incessant and

[1] Cf. *Annual Register*, 1828, History, pp. 138–9, for bitter criticism of Lawless as a "vain and heartless declaimer" and "an unprincipled gambler in rebellion".

[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 130–3, for the large repercussions of the speech made at Derry, on August 12th, by one whose "language in the House of Commons had invariably breathed more than ordinary vehemence against emancipation" and who now declared that faced by the necessity of choosing between the crushing of the Association and concession, he preferred concession.

almost deafening"; a tremendous outcry was kept up against Hunt; and, finally a "Protestant" petition was carried by a large majority.[1] The strength of the "No Popery" sentiment, that could be aroused in favourable circumstances, was also displayed, somewhat later, at a great County meeting in Devonshire, and then the "Protestant" leaders relaxed. They had no great mind to provide, by meetings of their own, a justification for incessant Catholic assemblies in Ireland or Radical meetings in Britain,[2] and, besides, it seemed yet hardly conceivable that Wellington and Peel could be preparing to "betray" them.

But Wellington and Peel had both ceased to see how the existing system in Ireland could be maintained, even for another year, without force of arms, and both, even if they hardly yet admitted it to themselves, were awaiting a suitable opportunity to request their party and the Crown to reconsider the Irish Question. As events turned out, matters did not run the course that Ministers would have chosen. On December 4th, Dr. Curtis, Catholic Primate of Ireland, taking advantage of old services rendered to Wellington in the Peninsula, wrote him a personal letter urging a settlement of the Catholic Question. Wellington, in a reply dated December 11th, admitted a sincere anxiety for a settlement but urged that the question was now so enmeshed in party bitterness that a "satisfactory remedy" was only conceivable if the question could be buried "in oblivion for a short time" while it was reconsidered dispassionately from all sides. Dr. Curtis sent the letter to the Association, where it was joyfully hailed as a proof of the Duke's conversion, though Dr. Curtis himself had, meantime, sent a reply to Wellington treating the short period of "oblivion", mentioned by the Duke, as inadmissible as well as highly dangerous in the existing temper of Ireland. Dr. Curtis now sent Wellington's message and his own reply to the Marquis of Anglesea, whom Wellington had himself sent to Ireland as Lord-Lieutenant. Anglesea, piqued apparently by Wellington's failure to keep him informed of current developments, answered the Catholic Primate

[1] H. Jephson, *The Platform*, ii, 27–9, has a full account, borne out by the newspaper reports.

[2] Cf. the anti-Catholic *Annual Register*, 1828, History, p. 145: "Such meetings are fitted to express nothing but tumultuous determination; there can be no weighing of argument. . . . But they are a perfectly legitimate mode of expressing opinion. . . . The leaders and speakers, too, of this assembly were very different from the noisy demagogues whose effusions had brought disgrace on public meetings."

in a letter which contained much good advice but also the opinion that the short period of "oblivion" was impossible and would, in any case, be misused and misrepresented by the Catholics' opponents.[1] There followed the inevitable dismissal of Anglesea, and O'Connell's denunciation of the "insane pilot who directs our almost tottering state". There could hardly have been a worse time for forcing upon the Crown and the Tory party the view of Peel and Wellington that the time had come to concede Catholic Emancipation, with safeguards. Such safeguards, too, as suppression of the Catholic Association and disfranchisement of the Irish forty-shilling freeholder, opened an apparently long new vista of trouble in Ireland. And yet a large portion of the Tory party, once recovered from the shock of Ministers' "betrayal", was destined to make Ministers' plight worse by declaring a war of revenge upon their treachery. What particularly angered the "Protestant" Tories was the fact that so little notice had been given them of Ministers' changed opinions that one member, at least, was hurrying to town, in February 1829, in the confident hope of helping Peel to defend the "Protestant constitution" in the new Session of Parliament.[2] Yet Ministers' secretiveness had been forced upon them by the great difficulties that they had with the King before he had given permission to put "the state of Ireland" upon the Cabinet and Parliamentary agenda.[3]

[1] *Croker Papers*, ii, 2–6, give a close picture of the situation as between Wellington and the Lord-Lieutenant. The *Annual Register*, 1828, quoted with special indignation this passage from Anglesea's letter: "But I differ from the opinion of the duke, that an attempt should be made to 'bury in oblivion' the question for a short time. First, because the thing is utterly impossible; and next, if the thing were possible, I fear that advantage might be taken of the pause, by representing it as a panic achieved by the late violent reaction, and by proclaiming that if the government at once and peremptorily decided against concession, the Catholics would cease to agitate, and then all the miseries of the last years of Ireland will be to be re-enacted."

[2] Cf. *Croker Papers*, ii, 8 (from Croker's *Diary*, under February 7th): "Peel made a joke about old Collett [M.P. for Cashel], who not knowing Peel's conversion, had written to him to say that he was hastening up to support the good old Protestant cause. This gaiety shows that Peel is sincere and cordially converted, but in a moment he seemed to recollect himself, and looked grave and almost discomposed at his own mirth, and sat silent and frowning the rest of the evening. The Attorney-General made a wry face at Peel's merriment. It seems doubtful whether he will not resign."

[3] Peel's *Memoirs*, i, 274: "at the commencement of the month of January 1829 his majesty had not yet signified his consent that the whole subject of Ireland, including the Catholic question, should be taken into consideration by his confidential servants". About the middle of the month, the King reluctantly allowed Cabinet consideration to begin but only on the understanding that he was not bound to the adoption of the Cabinet's advice. (*Ibid.*, p. 299.)

CHAPTER XXIII

PARLIAMENTARY REFORM BECOMES INEVITABLE, 1829–30

Greville Memoirs, November 28, 1830.
"I doubt if the Duke will ever be in a civil office again. . . . For the present deplorable state of things, and for the effervescence of public opinion, which threatens the overthrow of the Constitution in trying to amend it, Peel and the Duke are entirely responsible; and the former is less excusable . . . if he had gone long ago to the Duke, and laid before him the state of public opinion . . . and had refused to carry on the Government in the House of Commons with such a crew as he had, the Duke must have given way. Notwithstanding the great measures which have distinguished his Government, such as Catholic Emancipation and the repeal of the Test Acts, a continual series of systematic blunders . . . have rendered the first of these great measures almost useless. Ireland is on the point of becoming in a worse state than before the Catholic question was settled; and why? Because, first of all, the settlement was put off too long, and the fever of agitation would not subside, and because it was accompanied by an insult to O'Connell, which he has been resolved to revenge. . . . Then instead of depriving him of half his influence by paying the priests, and so getting them under the influence of Government, they neglected this. . . . What remains now to be done? Perhaps nothing, for the anti-Union question is spreading far and wide with a velocity that is irresistible. . . . But common shifts and expedients, partial measures will not do now, and in the state of the game a deep stake must be played or all will be lost. To buy O'Connell at any price, pay the Catholic Church, establish poor laws, encourage emigration, and repeal the obnoxious taxes and obnoxious laws, are the only expedients which have a chance of restoring order."

Notes by Sir Robert Heron, Bart., January 1831.
"France. When a King with his Ministers conspires against his people; his object despotism, his means massacre; can it be conceived that any considerable party in England regrets his not having succeeded: yet this regret the Duke of Wellington avows, and shares it with a large faction; this alone ought to prevent him from ever again possessing political power. We

have now an Administration pledged to Parliamentary Reform, to retrenchment, and non-interference. The chief among them are honest and able, and will redeem their pledges; but their task is difficult . . . there is a party increasing in strength —the extreme radicals—who rather than abandon any of their own theories, will be willing to oppose all the good they might procure for the country, even at the risk of bringing back to power those who have always opposed every thing liberal, and upheld every abuse."

Cobbett expects prosecution, January 1831.

"*On the blame imputed to me as to the cause of the popular commotions.*—It is very true, Parsons that I have, long and long ago, *foretold* what has now happened. I have been, for about six-and-twenty years, predicting that, if such a change were not made as would better the lot of the labourers, a terrible convulsion would take place. I have always said, that Englishmen would not, like Irishmen, lie down by hundreds and die quietly of starvation . . . It is very true, that I have, for many years, been complaining that the labourers carried potatoes (accursed hog-food) to field, instead of the bread, meat and cheese that they used to carry thither . . . It is very true, that I have long been saying, that the lowest working man was worse fed and worse clad than the felons in the hulks and jails . . . Nothing can be truer than that, over and over again, I asserted that the labourers were put up to auction, and their labour sold . . . Aye, but I not only related the sufferings and described the degradation of the labourers, but I foretold that they would not endure it for ever, and *that they would finally break forth and attack the rich* . . . but then EARL STANHOPE said the same thing . . . Fly at *him*, then Parsons; deal with him first, and then come at *me*. . . ."

On February 5, 1829 the fateful Session began in which Ministers designed to carry Catholic Emancipation. In the hope of placating their resentful "Protestant" supporters, Government opened the Session, disarmingly, with a Bill, virtually, to suppress the Catholic Association and any similar Association that might be founded in its place.[1] But it could hardly escape the notice of irate Protestants that the Bill was a temporary one, for a year only, that the Opposition rather forwarded than hindered its course, and that the Association itself, as if party to the conspiracy, decreed its own dissolution as soon as it knew Government's mind.[2] A great flood of anti-Popery petitions was, therefore, let loose on Parliament;[3] Peel was defeated when Oxford University was asked to re-elect him and found difficulty even at the pocket-borough of Westbury;[4] violent and seditious placarding, almost reminiscent of Gordon Riot days, was attempted in London;[5] and dangerous anti-Catholic intriguing took place at Court. On March 4th, indeed, the day before that fixed for opening the matter of Catholic Emancipation in Parliament, the King, influenced by the Duke of Cumberland, made such difficulties that Ministers resigned and were out of office for several hours before the King summoned them back again.[6] It is plain, perhaps, why Peel devoted so much of his speech of March

[1] *Hansard*, February 10th, Peel. The Bill gave the Lord-Lieutenant power to suppress any Association or meeting which he might think dangerous to the public peace, or inconsistent with the due administration of the law.

[2] M'Cullagh's *Sheil*, ii, 59, quoting Sheil at the meeting of February 12th: "The object of this body was, and is, Catholic emancipation; that object is, in my judgement, already obtained. Nothing except our own imprudence can now defeat it. . . . The course which I recommend is this: let us determine to dissolve; let us pass a series of resolutions declaratory of our motives for so doing; let us protest against any unnecessary abandonment of the rights of citizens; let us discontinue the collection of the [Catholic] rent, but preserve the Finance Committee, in order to pay our debts, and wind up our pecuniary concerns; let its meetings be private, in order that there may be no pretence for alleging that we maintain the shadow of the Association."

[3] *Annual Register*, 1829, History, p. 36, gives 957 as the number of petitions presented against Catholic Emancipation before the first reading of Government's Catholic Relief Bill. The number of pro-Catholic petitions at this date was 357.

[4] Peel's *Memoirs*, i, 342.

[5] *Annual Register*, 1829, Chronicle, has two accounts under the heading of "Seditious Placards". One is under the date, February 4th, and the other under the date of April 25th.

[6] Cf. *Croker Papers*, ii, 15, for a *Diary* extract under March 5th: "The Ministers came home last night *out of office*, but during the night more prudent counsels prevailed at Windsor, and a messenger arrived to-day with the King's acquiescence in the measure."

5th to proving, not merely the inevitability of Catholic Emancipation, but also the large and ample safeguards he was taking for Protestant interests. A Bill to disfranchise the forty-shilling freeholders of Ireland would accompany the Catholic Relief Bill to the Statute Book. And, in addition, Catholic members of Parliament would have to take, before admission, a very complete and binding oath;[1] Catholics would be excluded from the Lord-Lieutenancy of Ireland, the Lord Chancellorship, and all appointments at the Universities, Colleges and endowed schools; Catholic Ministers of State would be prohibited from tendering to the Crown any advice on ecclesiastical patronage; and any such patronage normally resting with the holder of an office would, if he were a Catholic, be transferred to the Crown. Nor was this yet all. Peel laid up a store of trouble for the Governments of the next half-century by undertaking, that Catholic Bishops would not be allowed to assume the titles borne by Bishops of the Established Church, that Catholic Mayors, Aldermen and Sheriffs would not be permitted to attend their chapels in municipal state, that the names and numbers of those dwelling in Catholic conventual institutions would be registered so that an increase could be guarded against and, finally, that no Jesuits would normally be permitted to enter the country.[2]

During the struggle of some six weeks that ensued, all the "liberal" elements in politics supported Ministers against the more conservative half of their own party in Commons and Lords. On April 9th Croker was able to write thus to the powerful magnate, Lord Hertford:[3]

> The thing is over, and well over—a majority of 105 in the Lords has astonished friends and foes.... The public mind is much more

[1] Cf. *Annual Register*, 1829, History, pp. 23–4: "I, A.B., do sincerely promise and swear, that I will be faithful and bear true allegiance.... I do renounce, reject, and abjure the opinion, that princes excommunicated or deprived by the Pope... may be deposed or murdered by their subjects.... I do not believe that the Pope of Rome... hath or ought to have, any temporal or civil jurisdiction... directly or indirectly, within this realm.... I will defend to the utmost of my power, the settlement of the property within this realm as established by the laws. And I do hereby disclaim, disavow, and solemnly abjure any intention to subvert the present Church establishment.... And I do solemnly swear that I never will exercise any privilege to which I am or may become entitled to disturb or weaken the Protestant religion or Protestant government in this Kingdom.... I do make this declaration... without any evasion, equivocation, or mental reservation whatsoever."

[2] *Hansard's Parliamentary Debates*, March 5th, Peel. Peel allowed that an exception might be made in the case of a scholar, engaged on a work of learning.

[3] *Croker Papers*, ii, 13–14.

composed, and the mob are much more inclined to cheer the Duke and Peel than their antagonists.

I dined yesterday with the Lord Mayor, having previously attended Peel's inauguration as a freeman of London, in Guildhall; the thing looked handsome, but, literally, the room was better than the company—Lord Nugent, Joe Hume, and such like were, except office men, the most distinguished of the company. We are not yet quite right—our aristocracy still stands sullenly aloof—but things improve, and after Easter I think the Duke will have re-united the great body of his scattered forces.

Certainly, it would have pleased the Duke vastly better to reunite the "scattered forces" of the Tory party than to accept the "liberal" support, continuously offered to him for the next year and a half, on condition that he continued in the path of "reform".[1] But the "betrayed Protestants" of the Tory party were altogether less ready than the "liberals" to consider an accommodation with Wellington, and some were, in fact, already vowing to bring about his downfall. Yet he had gone dangerously far in the effort to placate them, both in the "securities" accompanying Catholic Relief, and in the deliberate wording of the Relief Bill so as to force upon O'Connell the necessity of standing a second time for County Clare, to seek re-election, not from the forty-shilling freeholders now disfranchised, but from the ten-pound freeholders. O'Connell was, of course, allowed to state his case to the House, but when he refused the old pre-Emancipation Oath, the House decided that he was not entitled to ask for the new one until he had been re-elected.[2] It was the only possible decision on the wording of the Relief Bill, but it cost England, when superimposed upon forty-shilling disfranchisement, a great deal of the moral claim, even by the standards of that day, to expect much Irish "gratitude". In truth, during O'Connell's second election campaign in the summer of 1829, Ministers heard very little of gratitude either from "Protestants" or Catholics who, in the increased tension of the time, were to come to blows, in many parts of Ireland, on

[1] Cf. *A Letter to the Duke of Wellington on the expediency of making Parliamentary Reform a Cabinet Measure.* The writer, *An Englishman*, dated his letter, October 10, 1830, and it must therefore have been one of the last "liberal" invitations extended to Wellington. Its gist may be gathered from the following passages: "Introduce the measure unasked, and as unexpectedly as you did the Catholic Bill, and you may satisfy nine-tenths of the reformers with a moderate and reasonable change. Wait, however, till the measure becomes irresistible, and then much more will be required."

[2] *Hansard's Parliamentary Debates*, May 15th, 18th and 19th.

Boyne Day, July 12th.[1] Parliament had by that time been in prorogation for over a fortnight but O'Connell was still awaiting a re-election, delayed by the necessity of examining the claims of those who purported to have the £10 freeholds required by the new Act.[2]

It was on July 30th that O'Connell was finally re-elected, unopposed—thanks, angry Protestants claimed, to the wilful blindness of Government which looked on while the Catholic Association was virtually reconstituted and £5000 was provided for O'Connell's expenses.[3] By the time of his re-election, too, O'Connell had committed himself and Catholic Ireland to what was, from the Westminster viewpoint, an astonishing mixture of Radicalism and "Popish superstition". Cobbett and Hunt, of course, would heartily have approved his demand for Parliamentary Reform and a reversal of the late Disfranchisement Act; his declaration of war upon the East India Company's monopoly; his desire to introduce Poor Rates into Ireland; his assault upon "Grand Jury jobbing" in the Irish counties and Protestant Church Rates in the parishes; and, doubtless, too, his readiness to "procure an equitable distribution of church property between the poor on the one hand and the really laborious portion of the Protestant clergy on the other". But even Cobbett and Hunt might well have hesitated about O'Connell's promise to procure, for every Catholic parish priest, a parsonage and an adequate glebe, and they would hardly have liked to feel committed to O'Connell's full-blooded war against the "monstrous injustice that had been done to the Jesuits, and the monastic orders".[4] As O'Connell went on, during the Recess, to demand Repeal of the Union, a

[1] Cf. *Annual Register*, 1829, History, p. 129: "In different parts of the country, the Protestants celebrated, or prepared to celebrate, the 12th of July with the usual rejoicings. This the Catholics resolved to oppose by force, wherever they could. Wherever the police or yeomanry interfered, the Catholics viewed them as oppressors, let loose upon them by the partiality of the laws, and formed themselves into armed bands for resistance."

[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 123–4. The result of the new Act was, of course, a mass-disfranchisement of the poorer Catholics. Despite this, over a large part of Ireland, Catholic voters "of the better class" were the new electoral majority.

[3] Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 125: "So soon as he took the field, what was termed an 'Aggregate Meeting' of the Catholics took place. . . . This was nothing else than a meeting of the Catholic Association. It was held in the old Association rooms. . . . The very first thing done by the meeting was to vote £5000 of the rent as an aid to Mr. O'Connell . . . these meetings took place under the very eye of the government without interruption."

[4] *Ibid.*, O'Connell went farther and said defiantly of the anti-monastic part of the Act: "While it is law, its penalties will be submitted to, but let me add . . . that its mandate will most assuredly not be obeyed."

subject which even the most Radical in Britain were not prepared to take up, there seemed little immediate prospect of O'Connell's arrival in Parliament, for the 1830 Session, effecting any conspicuous change.

Meanwhile, during the autumn and winter of 1829–30, there came another industrial and agricultural depression which spelt inevitable trouble for Ministers. A very considerable petitioning movement began once more, encouraged to some extent both by the Opposition and the "old Tories", who could alike urge farmers and tradesmen to call lustily for reduced expenditure and lower taxation.[1] Some of the petitions inevitably demanded Parliamentary Reform, too, sometimes in very Radical terms, but by far the greater number seem to have been drawn up by men, who had agreed to exclude contentious political matter and to concentrate on "distress". It was a great encouragement to the "old Tories" to find that there was still strong feeling at the ports against the "liberal" abandonment of the old Navigation Code, and that there was considerable Protectionist irritation, too, at the easier entry conceded to foreign corn, and foreign products generally, by the "liberal" age.[2] Some "old Tories" seem to have gone to the length of encouraging denunciation of Peel's Currency Bill of 1819 because it had prepared the way for the return to gold and low prices while no corresponding scaling-down of creditor claims on the nation, and on individuals, had been arranged to do even-handed justice and prevent disaster.[3] Opposition, in fact, saw considerable danger to "free trade", the currency settlement, and even Catholic Relief, unless Wellington was supported against his Tory enemies, and Huskisson and the Canningites felt the same way. A curious Session resulted, therefore, in which Opposition undertook no direct hostilities against Ministers though holding itself free, in the day-to-day business of the House,

[1] Cf. *Notes by Sir Robert Heron, Bart.*, the Oppositionist M.P., who wrote thus of the Lincoln County Petition, in January 1830: "On a terribly cold day, Jan. 8, we met to the number of rather more than 2000, censured the Sheriff, and petitioned Parliament to repeal all the taxes on malt and beer [held to be hurtful to the barley farmer]. . . . I was a good deal ashamed of my coadjutors of the [anti-Emancipation] Newcastle and Sadler faction, with their tirades against free trade, toleration, &c.; still we may do good."

[2] *England in 1830*, a pamphlet that summarised 185 petitions of 1830, shows much Protectionist feeling to have existed among the petitioners.

[3] *Ibid.*, for even stronger and more widely-diffused feeling against Government's currency policy. It should be noted that the 185 petitions dealt with in this pamphlet were only adopted in time to be presented to a new Parliament in 1830.

to speak its "liberal" mind and, if necessary, vote against Ministerial shortcomings.

A revealing short summary of the Session, as it developed between the opening of Parliament, on February 4, 1830, and the death of George IV on June 26th following, may be found in the *Notes* of the Opposition member, responsible for inflicting on Ministers their most serious Sessional check. Though he had defeated Government, on March 26th, where an unnecessary piece of "jobbery" seemed in question, Sir Robert Heron was still, in June, expressing no hostility to Ministers but rather gratitude to Wellington for having carried Catholic Emancipation in the only way it could have been done.[1] The unusual situation, as between Ministers and Opposition, is even more strikingly illustrated in Peel's speech of March 26th in answer to Heron's denial, that there was a case for putting two sons of Cabinet Ministers upon the Pension List, because Navy offices, to which they should never have been appointed, had now been suppressed. Here is the *Annual Register*'s summary of Peel's speaking:[2]

Mr. Peel acknowledged, in most grateful terms, the support he was receiving, and had received, from the Whigs. So far from being insensible to the value of that "independent support", most sorry should he be to lose it; and never, in the latest day of his existence, could he forget the conduct pursued by the gentlemen on the other side of the House on the great measure of last Session. The manner in which they gave their support to the government, at that time, could never be forgotten by him; and the conduct pursued by them on that occasion reflected the highest credit on the political parties of this country. In regard to the pensions themselves, Mr. Peel did not seem

[1] Heron's *Notes*, under June 1830: "This has been a most extraordinary Session, there being no man who has authority to keep the House of Commons in any order. There are men who waste its time day after day till eight, nine, or even ten o'clock, in foolish speeches on petitions . . . a long debate then ensues on some subject before the House. Bills of great consequence are read at three in the morning; and many that ought to have been passed or rejected without delay, are indefinitely postponed. Ministers have no secure majority, for whenever the old Opposition and the ultras can agree on any subject, they must be left in a minority. The Duke of Wellington has certainly done more for the country than any former Minister, but it is not enough to meet the necessities of the times; the country begins to be tired of his despotism, and would be much sooner tired if he were to leave anything to his colleagues, of whom Peel alone possessed any public character or confidence. The gratitude the old Opposition has felt for the carrying the Catholic bill, has more than once saved the Administration; but this is fast wearing out, and their only safeguard now is the fear of their successors."

[2] *Annual Register*, 1829, History, p. 55. Heron's majority was 139-121.

inclined to make any vigorous stand in support of them. They were not, he said, the result of any ministerial job, nor of any special rule of the existing government; but were in conformity to the rule of former governments; and the intention of ministers was plain, from their having stipulated with the Admiralty, that the gentlemen in question should be removed from the superannuation list on the first opportunity. Under the ordinary rules by which these matters were governed, it was a vote which ministers were justified in laying before the House; but still it was only a mere estimate, which the House would allow or reject, as it thought proper.

A tacit *entente* of the kind reigning, between Government and Opposition, during the greater part of the 1829 and 1830 Sessions could not, in the nature of things, last indefinitely. Opposition might be very thankful for Catholic Emancipation, carried in 1829, and for the abolition of the duties on beer, cider and leather, carried in the 1830 Budget as a result of retrenchments which, in its opinion, might have gone farther.[1] Opposition, too, might expect further large retrenchments to result from the official investigations into Colonial expenditure, proposed by Ministers with an earnestness that won the approval not merely of Mr. Huskisson and Lord Althorp but also of that arch-economist, Joseph Hume.[2] But, at a season when even "old Tories" were playing with schemes of Parliamentary Reform, and Canningites were opening the struggle for Jewish Emancipation, it was inevitable that Opposition's "liberalism" should outstrip, by a good deal, Government's ability to follow. And when Opposition, supported by the Canningites, failed to carry the transfer of East Retford's members to Birmingham, and failed, also, to find members for Birmingham, Leeds, and Manchester in any other

[1] Cf. *Hansard's Parliamentary Debates*, March 15th, Goulburn, for the Budget speech of the year.

[2] Cf. *Ibid.* Goulburn had said this on retrenchment: "Looking to . . . the great accumulation of capital, and to the diminished rate of interest . . . I cannot entertain a doubt, that the House has now the power, effectually and conveniently to reduce that part of the national debt which bears an interest of four per cent. . . . The various departments of the government are engaged in an examination of the minutest kind into the expenditure of every branch . . . and I look to the result of that examination for the means of still further relieving the burthens of taxation. . . . I look to the consolidation of various departments . . . to a better and more economical mode of collecting the revenue . . . as likely to place hereafter at the disposal of the government a great surplus revenue, which will enable us to reduce taxation still further. In the same manner, and to the same extent, the government proposes to empower a commission to deal with the whole of the colonial expenditure . . . this most extensive branch of the expenditure. . . ."

way,[1] the prospect of a speedy return of party warfare became obvious to all.

As matters turned out, the renewal of party strife was precipitated by the long-expected death of George IV on June 26th. On June 30th, Earl Grey in the Lords and Lord Althorp, in the Commons, declared war on Ministers' project of evading, for a space, their increasing difficulties by winding up the Session on the pretence of the General Election, made necessary by the demise of the Crown. Under the law, there was no real case for such hurry as Ministers were advocating since a new Parliament needed not to be assembled for six months. And Opposition gathered the support of the "old Tories", led by Lord Eldon himself, for the view that it would show culpable negligence to hurry the existing Parliament off the scene before a Regency Act had been passed, making provision for the possible succession of the new King's niece, the eleven-year old Princess Victoria. Opposition showed special resentment of the cry against "Coalition", immediately raised by Government supporters, and the threat, employed by some, that unless the Duke got his way, he would resign. The speech, which was regarded as reopening the days of bitter party warfare, came from Brougham and had reference to the play that had been made with the threat of Wellington's resignation.

"It is an argument," said Brougham,[2] "which I acknowledge I have not heard in this House, viz. 'If you leave government in a minority, I will resign, and where will you get a field-marshal to superintend your finances and your law courts?' If I had had the misfortune to hear such a threat uttered in this place, I would have stated the grounds on which I deemed it my duty not to listen to the threat. . . . I conceive it barely possible for the united kingdom to bear the going out of office of a considerable portion of his majesty's ministers. Let them not . . . indulge fond hopes from the measure they contemplate; that hope may meet with such a disappointment that they may look back even to this parliament with some of the pleasures of memory. The day of force has gone by; he who would rule this country by royal favour, or by military power, may be hurled down from his height. Him I accuse not—I accuse you (addressing the ministerial benches), his flatterers, his mean, fawning parasites" (loud cheers). Sir R. Peel, with great vehemence interrupted him—I ask the hon. and learned member if he means to accuse me of being such? The hon. and learned gentleman

[1] *Hansard's Parliamentary Debates*, February 23rd, for Lord John Russell's Bill. It obtained Huskisson's support and was only beaten by 188 votes against 140.

[2] *Annual Register*, 1830, History, p. 139.

addressed himself to this side of the House, and said, "I mean to accuse *you*, his flatterers, his fawning parasites." I am sitting on this side of the House; I am the representative of the opinions of those who sit here; but I put the question to the hon. and learned gentleman—not on their behalf, but as an individual—and I ask, "does he presume to say of me," (loud shouts drowned the right hon. gentleman's voice) "does he presume to say of me, that I am the mean, fawning parasite of any man?" (Loud cries of "Hear, hear," "Chair," "Mr. Brougham.") Mr. Brougham—"I allude to the votes which have passed, to the resolutions which have been come to, the cries which have been heard, and I have as much right to answer those cries as they to utter them."

Ministers' shrunken majorities were no very good omen for the General Election which followed the formal Dissolution of Parliament on July 24th.[1] Ministers had apparently hoped, to the last, that some composition with their former "old Tory" associates would prove possible, and to make it easier, had deliberately abstained from Coalition negotiations both with Canningites and Whigs. By the end of July 1830, Wellington was conscious enough of his Government's weakness to have turned to two different "liberal" quarters for help. The first overture seems to have gone to Earl Grey and to have been declined whereupon another was made to Lord Melbourne who, as William Lamb, had accepted the difficult Irish Chief Secretaryship from Canning and continued to hold it, with increasing reputation, until Wellington's breach with Huskisson. Melbourne, too, was offered place not merely for himself but also for Palmerston and Charles Grant, the Canningites with whom he had been most closely associated. But this negotiation, too, came to nothing since Melbourne refused to act without Huskisson and Earl Grey who, if they had consented to accede to any negotiation, would only have treated on the basis of a dissolution of Wellington's existing Ministry.[2]

To make matters worse for Wellington, the General Election took place in an atmosphere of rising "liberal" excitement, due to the absorbing news daily coming in from France. There an ultra-conservative Prime Minister, Polignac, for whose appointment Wellington was regarded as largely responsible,[3] had involved his

[1] *Hansard's Parliamentary Debates*, June 30th, for the division in the Lords and Commons. Earl Grey raised 56 votes against Government's 100 and Althorp raised 139 votes against 185.

[2] H. L. Bulwer, *Palmerston*, i, 381.

[3] Cf. Heron's *Notes*, under October 1829: "The King of France suddenly this summer dismissed his Ministers, and appointed the Prince de Polignac his chief Minister. The Duke of Wellington had certainly a great share in this

master, Charles X, in complete ruin. But the "July Revolution" in Paris, which dethroned Charles X, passed so quickly and so thoroughly under "respectable" control that, so far from deterring British "respectables" from giving applause to revolution, it actually moved many to consider whether something similar would not have to be done in Britain unless a reasonable measure of Parliamentary Reform were soon conceded. The committee, for example, which made Hume M.P. for Middlesex, loudly cheered the news from Paris on its first arrival, while Brougham, who was being promoted M.P. for Yorkshire, devoted his warmest hustings-passages to warning the Wellington Government against hostility towards the new French régime. Matters went even further than this among certain circles. Francis Place, who managed Hume's election, wrote thus in his *Diary* for July 1830:[1]

> This new Revolution produced a very extraordinary effect on the middle classes, and sent a vast number of persons to me with all sorts of projects and propositions. Every one was glorified with the courage, the humanity, and the honesty of the Parisians, and the common people became eagerly desirous to prove that they too were brave and humane and honest. All soon seemed desirous to fight against the Government if it should attempt to control the French Government.

But after a General Election, some of whose results were felt to have markedly weakened the position of the Wellington Government,[2] the spate of exciting continental news did not stop. Apart from continuous developments of absorbing interest in France, August brought the beginning of another "respectable" revolution at Brussels, and September and October unceasing reports of successful demands for more "liberty" at Brunswick, Leipzig and Dresden, Cassel (Hesse) and elsewhere.[3] The wave of "liberal"

intrigue, and expected that all moderate men would rally round the Prince. . . . The Duke of Wellington is . . . very much alarmed at the results of his own handiwork."

[1] Graham Wallas, *Life of Francis Place*, p. 244.

[2] *Annual Register*, 1830, Chronicle, pp. 139–40, apparently considered the county pollings in Cambridge, Essex, Devon and Suffolk of significance. "Wherever," wrote the *Annual Register* (History, p. 146), "the elections approached to the character of being popular, no candidate found himself a gainer by announcing that he had been, or intended to be, an adherent of the existing Government." The *Greville Memoirs* also note (July 31st): "The elections here are going against Government, and no candidate will avow that he stands on Government interest, or with the intention of supporting the Duke's Ministry."

[3] Cf. *Blair's Chronological Tables*, ed. Bohn, for September 6th to 28th: "duke Charles of Brunswick, expelled by his subjects, takes refuge in England; his

unrest and protest against "despotism" was soon destined to spread to Switzerland, the Papal States, Savoy, Schleswig, Denmark, and, above all, to Poland, and, meanwhile, England, too, was not without its signs of the infection. Place, as was shown above, was early approached by London's working-class leaders to organise, if necessary, measures of force to prevent the Wellington Government from hostile interference against the French Revolution. Place, of course, had little use for such a dangerous order of ideas, and on August 12th, other leaders took charge of the combative Ultra-Radicalism of the capital when the first of a long series of meetings took place in the Blackfriars Rotunda to argue the question of Republic or Monarchy for France. Gale Jones, with a record of Radical agitation dating back to 1795 and beyond, Richard Carlile, the "anti-Christian" long imprisoned for reprinting Paine's attacks on religion, and the Rev. Robert Taylor, Anglican clergyman turned notorious "infidel preacher", were the leading lights at the Rotunda proceedings, which enjoyed some support from Henry Hunt, too, until he found them becoming too impolitic and dangerous for one with Parliamentary ambitions.[1] At the Rotunda foregathered all those who, like Lovett and Hetherington, were to organise the working-class politics of the ensuing decade, and soon there ensued another development. In October, Hetherington began the issue of his *Penny Papers for the People*, periodical sheets more adapted to the taste and to the pocket of the Rotunda audiences, and the parallel would-be revolutionaries throughout the country, than anything yet devised even by Cobbett or Carlile.

But before the "dangerous London mob", suitably stimulated by the spoken and written word, entered into politics early in November 1830, the countryside had set a dangerous and surprising example. Why it was, in Kent, that rick-burning first broke out, in September, accompanied by the dispatch of threatening letters and the destruction of threshing-machines, is not very certain but it is hard to resist the conclusion that Kent was specially affected by the revolutionary breezes blowing from just across the Channel. But all pauperised farm-labourers had had a

brother William is called to assume the government. Commotions in Leipzig and Dresden. The king of Saxony shares his power with his nephew Frederic, and gives his people a constitution. September 13th. The elector of Hesse Cassel embodies a civic guard, and authorizes the States to remodel the government, October 2nd to 16th, etc. etc."

[1] Cf. *Quarterly Review*, January 1831, pp. 299–300.

are now to be indemnified for the most wanton outrages that have ever been committed in England."

The Kendal Chronicle on Lord Lonsdale's Parliamentary influence in 1818.

"It may be useful, on the eve of a general election, to record the state of the Lowther representation in the House of Commons:

Lord Lowther, Colonel Lowther	Sons of the Earl of Lonsdale	Members for Westmorland
James Lowther, Esq.	Colonel of Westmorland Militia	for Appleby
John Lowther, Esq.	(Swillington)	for Cumberland
John H. Lowther, Esq., Rt. Hon. T. Wallace	(Swillington)	for Cockermouth
Sir James Graham	(of Kirkstall)	for Carlisle
Hon. Mr. Ward, Mr. Long		for Haslemere"

On June 5, 1817, the very day that Committees of Secrecy were nominated in both Houses of Parliament to study Ministers' new "Green Bags" of alarming documents, T. J. Wooler was put on trial for some writing in the *Black Dwarf* of April 2nd. The *Black Dwarf* had, after Cobbett's flight, become the leading organ of the "Radical Reformers" and was destined to remain so until Cobbett's return in 1819.[1] In their desire to silence the new cheap weekly before it had gained firm hold, Ministers were incautious enough to pick upon language from Wooler which, violent though it was, hardly passed the limits of permissible political criticism. One short sample shall be quoted from the indictment:[2]

> Our Ministers have deceived and betrayed us. We have to reproach them with most infamous duplicity, and dreadful treachery—they promised to fight our battles, whilst they fought their own. Whilst they talked of patriotism, they meant blood. They had engaged in a contest against freedom abroad, to sacrifice freedom at home—that Constitution which France never thought of assailing, and which she never wished to injure, had perished ignobly at St. Stephen's.

Wooler, who had undertaken his own defence, made an intrepid reply to the charges, and, though a verdict of Guilty was at first recorded, it transpired almost immediately that three of the Jurors had dissented from the Verdict as returned by the Foreman.[3] This revelation actually came in Court while Wooler was being tried on a second charge—that of having derided the right of petitioning when stating that:

> . . . notwithstanding the repeated proofs which the people had received of the folly of petitioning the House of Commons, where their petitions had been received with neglect, yet they still adhered to it with the strongest affection—the people contended for the right of petitioning; they had it; so had the slaves of the Dey of Algiers.[4]

[1] This, though Cobbett found the means of recommencing the *Register* from America after an intermission of under three months. Cobbett did not, of course, relish being superseded by Wooler or reproved by him for sheltering in America, and there were some sharp exchanges. (Cf. *Black Dwarf*, January 7, 1818.)

[2] *Kendal Chronicle*, June 14, 1817.

[3] Even the *Annual Register*, 1817, Appendix to Chronicle, p. 163, admitted of Wooler's defence: "It cannot be denied that the spirit of it obtained the applauses of a great part of the audience, which the sheriffs found it difficult to repress." Wooler had received some coaching from a sympathetic attorney, Charles Pearson, and owed much also to the intervention, at the critical moment, of Joseph Chitty, one of the most learned men at the Bar.

[4] *Kendal Chronicle*, June 14th. The paper's précis has here been retained.

years of discretion; insist on *no more public sinecures*; *no more public pensioners or placemen*; *no more vexatious taxation, but one* GRADUATED PROPERTY TAX; *no more Church abuses*; *no more clerical cormorants*; NO MONOPOLIES; petition for a GENERAL NATIONAL INDEPENDENT GUARD; tell him *if he will assist the people the people will assist him.*

Now, after Wellington's total rejection of even a modicum of Parliamentary Reform, more threatening preparations began to excite dangerous mob-demonstrations. The King was due to dine in the City, on November 9th, with the new Lord Mayor, and perilous plans were laid in Ultra-Radical circles to stage a great display against Wellington when he appeared in the Royal procession. Of the oratory and writing that were employed to secure such a result, specimens may be quoted from the *Penny Papers for the People*:[1]

At a crowded meeting of the British Co-operation Society, held at the Mechanics' Institution Theatre, on Thursday last, Mr. Edmonds, waving his arm decorated with a broad bright tri-coloured wristband, uttered the following sentences amid thundering cheers:—

"Gentlemen,—The king's speech, to use a theatrical phrase, has been *damned* by the whole nation. That Horse Guard speech was a signal for every honest Englishman to mount the tri-coloured riband. Wear it, every man of you, on the Lord Mayor's day.

"Let us now, in answer to this, again beseech our fellow-countrymen to refrain from anything like violence: let us by the force of *truth*, overthrow injustice and oppression. On the 9th, let us, one and all, demand our rights of our so soon unpopular king—and let us not waste our breath in asking redress for merely the *effect* of evil; let us strike at the cause, and cry, with one voice, for a REFORMED CONSTITUTION, NO OLIGARCHY, NO HOUSE OF PEERS, THE BALLOT. Let his Majesty hear the real voice of the people, and let him bend before its thunder! But let us beseech you not to vent your rage and disappointment upon such a secondary evil as the unfortunate police . . . who, in hard times like the present, can blame his fellow-countrymen for accepting any employment . . . ?

"We are informed that it is almost incredible the number of SWORD-STICKS, bludgeons with daggers in them, &c., that have been purchased lately: it is impossible to execute the demands for them; gunmakers and cutlers have also an immense pressure of business; this is not to be wondered at, considering the danger of the times. . . ."

There were even more open incitements to rebellion than this,[2] and, on November 6th, the Lord Mayor Elect wrote to Wellington

[1] *Penny Papers for the People*, November 8th.

[2] Cf. *Annual Register*, 1830, History, pp. 159–60, for two specimens of the printed handbills circulated under the rubric of *Liberty or Death.*

begging him to come under adequate military protection.[1] Wellington, fearing bloodshed, determined to cancel the Royal visit but, in communicating the intelligence to the City authorities, Peel, as Home Secretary, used language grave enough to start a veritable panic.[2] As soon as the "public" had recovered its balance, the panic became, of course, another item in the "public's" account against Ministers, and so, too, did the street-fighting, that burst out on November 8th and 9th, between the new police and a mob that refused to be robbed of all chance of demonstrating for "liberty" and against "tyranny".[3] It was, in these very unfavourable circumstances, that Ministers had to prepare to meet two dangerous motions, Sir Henry Parnell's demand for a Select Committee on the Civil List, on November 15th, and, next day, a Brougham motion on Parliamentary Reform. The Brougham motion was never come to owing to Government's defeat on November 15th. Sir Henry Parnell, though an Irish Whig, had been an efficient and hard-working Chairman of Finance Committees with strong views of his own on possible "retrenchments".[4] The case he now put for an investigation, by Select Committe, into Civil List accounts, that burdened the "public" without benefiting the Crown, was strong enough to associate a large number of "independent men" and "old Tories" with the Opposition vote against Government. Ministers were defeated by 233 votes against 204 and announced their resignation next day. They, doubtless, had some hopes that no strong or lasting Ministry could be formed from among the mixture of Whig, Radical, Canningite and "old Tory" votes that had defeated them. One well-placed observer remarked that "Peel certainly was in excellent spirits for a beaten Minister" and added his own view, widely shared among the inner circle, that Reform would prove a "terrible question" for the ex-Opposition "as it is a hundred to one that whatever they do they will not go far enough to satisfy the country".[5]

But some of the rocks on the path of Reform did not prove so

[1] *Ibid.*

[2] *Ibid.*, Chronicle under November 7th: "The effect of Sir Robert Peel's letter . . . was beyond description. Men hastened to purchase arms and to secure the fastenings of their houses, as if the banner of rebellion had been actually displayed in the streets. On Monday, Consols fell three per cent. . . ."

[3] *Ibid.*, under November 9th.

[4] Cf. his *Financial Reform*, a work published in 1830.

[5] *Greville Memoirs*, under November 17th.

difficult as had been anticipated. Earl Grey, with an active political record going back to 1786, made a widely acceptable Prime Minister; and the King made no difficulties about accepting Parliamentary Reform as the programme of a new Government. Calling into council two other leading Whig survivors of the "Ministry of all the Talents", Lords Lansdowne and Holland, Grey constructed a Government which was, politically and personally, a good deal stronger than Wellington's. The new Cabinet's centre of gravity was in the tightly-knit Whig group of Grey as First Lord of the Treasury, Lansdowne as Lord President of the Council, Holland as Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Lord Althorp as Chancellor of the Exchequer and Leader of the Commons. Buttressing itself at Court by making the Duke of Devonshire, Lord Chamberlain, the central Whig group found non-Cabinet place for younger representatives of other great Whig families when making Lord John Russell, Paymaster and the Hon. Edward Stanley, Chief Secretary at Dublin. But the "old Whig connexion" was not numerous or powerful enough, of itself, to man a Government, and part of Whig strategy consisted in winning allies of reputation or experience, who were ready now to agree that "moderate reform" had become a necessity yet who would also serve as a brake on the extremer men in the Reform camp. The man who caused most anxiety in the "moderate Reform" camp was Brougham, and he owed it to this anxiety that he was removed from the House of Commons altogether though this involved making him Lord Chancellor and a Cabinet Minister.[1] Lord Durham was another Cabinet Minister, who had committed himself to "extreme" Reform notions in the past and, though he was Grey's son-in-law, there were those who were happier to find him and Brougham largely outnumbered in the Cabinet by advocates of "moderate Reform" only.[2] These advocates came principally from the Canningites, who sent a strong section into the Cabinet and the lower offices, but there was also in the Cabinet one man who counted as a Tory, the Duke of Richmond.

Ministers began better than some men had expected in view of

[1] Cf. *Greville Memoirs*, under November 19 and 21, 1830.

[2] *Ibid.*, May 22, 1831, for Lyndhurst, Wellington's Lord Chancellor, ascribing the Reform plan of 1831 to Durham and accounting for its acceptance by the rest thus: "they never had an idea of bringing forward any such measure as this till they found themselves so weak in the House of Commons that nothing but a popular cry and Radical support could possibly save them".

their formidable problems at home, in Ireland and on the Continent. But in February they were floundering dangerously in the House of Commons where their Civil List proposals and their Budget were strongly criticised and where Lord Althorp appeared likely to become a monumental failure as Leader of the House.[1] But much was changed after March 1st when Lord John Russell introduced what the age considered a really sweeping Bill for Parliamentary Reform. The "public" and the Press rallied so heartily, for example, to the plan of sweeping away the representation from 60 decayed boroughs with less than 2000 inhabitants apiece and of taking one member away, also, from 47 other boroughs with less than 4000 inhabitants each that many of Government's problems were automatically solved. For the next eighteen months "the Bill, the whole Bill, and nothing but the Bill" gave Administration a unique *raison d'être* and the mass of the nation every reason for supporting it against Tory criticism and opposition. For better or for worse, the more modern history of England had begun.

[1] *Ibid.*, under February 1831.

PART TWO

CHAPTER XXIV

RELIGION

"Before you produce your main objection to the genuineness of the books of Moses, you assert 'That there is no affirmative evidence that Moses is the author of them'—What! no affirmative evidence? In the eleventh century, Maimonides drew up a confession of faith for the Jews . . . it consists of only thirteen articles; and two of them have respect to Moses; one affirming the authenticity, the other the genuineness of his books. . . . This is the faith of the Jews at present, and has been their faith ever since the destruction of their city and temple; it was their faith in the time when the authors of the New Testament wrote; it was their faith during the captivity in Babylon; in the time of their kings and judges; and no period can be shown, from the age of Moses to the present hour, in which it was not their faith. Is this no affirmative evidence?"

From Bishop Watson's *Apology for the Bible in Answer to the Writings of Thomas Paine* (1796).

"Supernatural religion has been fertile in inventing systems concerning the origin of the world. The period which has been assigned to its duration has been extremely different among different nations of the earth, and has been limited or extended by theological authority. The Chinese records ascribe to the earth a duration of more than 20,000 years, and according to the opinions of some, of more than 40,000 years. These opinions are controverted by Christian believers, because according to their sacred writings, the age of the earth is only about 6,000 years. Every opinion upon this subject, which is supported by a popular and supernatural theology, is maintained with a tenacity which fanatic dogmatism never fails to inspire. It is, no doubt, a matter of curious inquiry when and by what means the earth was produced, what important changes it has undergone, and by what means these changes have been effectuated. . . . It is, however, a subject of vast difficulty, and . . . it will probably always be impossible to reduce to absolute certitude any philosophical ideas upon this abstruse and difficult case."

From Elihu Palmer's *Principles of Nature* (1802) as reprinted, 1819.

"A reform of the Church, like most other reforms, would permanently benefit the many and only temporarily injure the

few. The lawn-sleeves, the shovel-hats, silk-aprons, and monopolizing incumbents would be the chief sufferers; while the condition of the most numerous and useful order of the clergy would be improved. Such odious abuses as non-residence and pluralities would be abolished. . . . The equalizing of the value of sees would remove the abuse of *translations*. . . . Away then would go the TITHE,—the most unjust and impolitic impost the ingenuity of rulers ever devised. . . . Why keep up twenty-two [Irish] bishops where there are scarcely any parsons? or why maintain these parsons, with large endowments, when they have lost their flocks? There are scores, aye, hundreds of well paid rectors and vicars, without a single protestant hearer; there are *thirteen hundred and fifty parishes*, without even a church to preach in; yet in all these parishes the tithes are levied or compounded for to the utmost farthing."

From *The Extraordinary Black Book* (ed. 1831).

In the first two chapters of this book, much attention was necessarily given to the politico-ecclesiastical disputes that raged in Parliament and the Press on the claim of the Protestant Dissenters to be freed from the disabilities of the Test and Corporation Acts. Even before the French Revolution had embittered the controversy, Churchmen claimed that there were designs among the Dissenters, if they could win the power, of sweeping away Tithes and, perhaps, the whole Church establishment. And the nation was reminded that the Dissenters looked back with special pride to the Commonwealth period when those, whom they regarded as their predecessors, had succeeded in confiscating all episcopal estates and in annihilating both Monarchy and Ecclesiastical Hierarchy. Apart, too, from the loud alarms raised by Churchmen on such major matters as Tithes and Church Lands, their writers claimed to show reason to fear even more immediate danger, from Dissenting designs, in other ecclesiastical spheres. One Church critic claimed to find, in Priestley's pamphleteering,[1] plain proof that he demanded, in addition to Tithe Abolition, the exclusion of Bishops from the House of Lords, the abolition of subscription to the Thirty-Nine Articles at the Universities, the repeal of the existing Law of Blasphemy (which punished even Unitarian speaking and writing),[2] and the conferment of the right to celebrate marriages on Dissenting Ministers.[3]

Pitt had taken a sympathetic view of Church anxieties even in 1787, and when some of the Paris developments of 1789 and 1790 which shocked or disturbed the normal member, won what was regarded as general Dissenting applause, Burke entered the fray,

[1] Priestley's pamphlet was entitled, *A Letter to the Right Honourable William Pitt . . . on the Subjects of Toleration and Church Establishment, occasioned by his Speech against the Repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts.* The critic wrote a stinging review in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, May 1787, p. 423.

[2] The Unitarians at length obtained some legal security by the 53 Geo. III, cap. 160, entitled "TO RELIEVE PERSONS WHO IMPUGN THE DOCTRINE OF THE HOLY TRINITY FROM CERTAIN PENALTIES". The Act was extended to Ireland by the 57 Geo. III, cap. 70.

[3] In regard to the Anglican marriage ceremony, "forced" on Protestant Dissenters (except Quakers) by the existing laws, there was to be a specially interesting agitation against Church "privilege". Before the subject was pushed to the forefront of politics and the (Dissenters' Marriage) Bill of 1836 obtained, "extreme" Radical Unitarians with special objections to such things in the Anglican marriage service as the invocation of the Trinity and the kneeling of bride and bridegroom before the altar had had to give a lead in staging Church "scenes" and in reporting them fully in the *Freethinking Christians' Magazine* (1811–14) and the *Freethinking Christians' Quarterly Register* (1823–5).

on the conservative side, with a vehemence and effect that were astonishing. The defeat inflicted on Fox's motion of March 2, 1790, for Test Act Repeal, was decisive enough, at 294 votes against 105, to bludgeon the question out of politics for many a long year. And it became safe for the Bishops to ignore even the appeal of the Scottish Kirk for such Test Act adjustments as would secure Presbyterian Scotsmen the same formal equality of right to English office as Englishmen, it was alleged, enjoyed in Scotland.[1] Before long, indeed, events on the Continent began moving the opinion of the Parliamentary majority rather to concessions for Catholics than for dissident fellow-Protestants. But that is another story which must be told in its own place, though it is worth noting here that the Dissenters, when asking for Test Act Repeal, in regard to themselves, had affirmed the policy of retaining the Test as against Catholics. The traditional case for an anti-Catholic Test consisted, of course, in the affirmation that Catholics were under the spiritual domination of a foreign Prince, but it may be doubted whether Dissenters did wisely in accepting the moral case for a sacramental Test at all.

To turn from the Parliamentary debates on Church "rights" to the general controversial field among the theologians is, of course, to turn to a very different scene. But there, too, in 1791, the Anglican position, under varied criticism though it was from the Roman, the Dissenting and the "sceptical" or "Atheist", viewpoints, seemed to be a strong one. In the face of Rome, for example, there was yet none of that uneasy realisation of the ignoble part played, in the sixteenth century, by many of the founders of Anglicanism which was, in the nineteenth century, to bring such numerous conversions. The story was still all one of "Papal pretensions and extortions", and Anglicans could even venture to plume themselves on the Christian charity which allowed them to favour some further slight ameliorations in the legal status of Catholics despite the opposition of brutal and ignorant mobs. In the face of Dissent, too, Churchmen still saw reason for rejoicing in the notable controversial victory obtained

[1] Cf. Thomas Somerville, *My Own Life and Times, 1741–1814*, pp. 225–43, for the account, by the leader of the Kirk movement, of how the Scottish case was defeated in Parliament in 1791. The Government case was, of course, that Scotsmen's grievances, even more than those of the Dissenters, were merely formal, since the annual Indemnity Acts, passed regularly since 1727, had, in effect, secured them from prosecution for having held office, during the previous twelve months, while out of communion with the Church of England.

by Samuel Horsley over Dr. Priestley, the Dissenting scientist-preacher who had ventured rashly into making a very Unitarian picture of the beliefs of the Early Church. Priestley had not only been convicted of Greek imperfect enough to rob his reading of Early Christian Theology of all authority but a dangerous blow had been struck at the credit of all Dissenting scholarship.[1] And, finally, though there was some alarm at the reinforcement which native scepticism, troublesome enough already with Hume, Gibbon and the Deists, had obtained from France, the Church's worst enemy would hardly have claimed that scepticism had yet reached the poor. But that consummation was fated to come before long.

In 1793 Tom Paine, who in his *Rights of Man* of 1791–2 had just done so much to found British working-class politics, was meditating, in Paris, the work which was to originate the working-class "infidelity" both of Britain and America. Paine, who had had to flee from England in September 1792,[2] had been promptly admitted a member of the French Convention but was, in the latter half of 1793, growing appalled, on his own account, by the bloody fury of the Jacobins and the undiscriminating attack that was raging against "superstition". It was to give Paine a tactically strong opening for the first part of the *Age of Reason* that he could claim to have been finally driven to put pen to paper in his anxiety to save the principles of morality and humanity from the universal shipwreck of religion in France. It might be well to quote from the opening of the *Age of Reason: being an Investigation of True and of Fabulous Theology* in order to understand the peculiar strength of its style and of its appeal. Here are the first paragraphs:[3]

> It has been my intention, for several years past, to publish my thoughts upon religion. I am well aware of the difficulties that attend the subject: and from that consideration, had referred it to a more advanced period of life. I intended it to be the last offering I should make to my fellow-citizens of all nations. . . .
>
> The circumstance that has now taken place in France, of the total abolition of the whole national order of priesthood, and of everything

[1] When commenting on the third edition of Horsley's *Tracts in Controversy with Dr. Priestley . . . originally published in the Years 1783, 1784, and 1786*, the *Quarterly Review* pronounced them "the severest castigation which a rash and ignorant invader of another's province ever received".

[2] Cf. *Trial* of [Paine] *for a Libel on the King and Constitution* (1792).

[3] From *Paine's Theological Works* as issued by Edward Truelove in the 1860's.

appertaining to compulsive systems of religion, and compulsive articles of faith, has not only precipitated my intention, but rendered a work of this kind exceedingly necessary, lest, in the general wreck of superstitution, of false systems of government, and false theology, we lose sight of morality, of humanity, and the theology that is true.

As several of my colleagues . . . have given me the example of making their voluntary and individual profession of faith, I also will make mine. . . .

I believe in one God; and I hope for happiness beyond this life.

I believe in the equality of man, and I believe that religious duties consist in doing justice, loving mercy, and endeavouring to make our fellow-creatures happy.

But lest it should be supposed that I believe many other things in addition to these, I shall in the progress of this work declare the things I do not believe. . . .

I do not believe in the creed professed by the Jewish church, by the Roman church, by the Greek church, by the Turkish church, by the Protestant church, nor by any church that I know of. . . .

All national institution of churches, whether Jewish, Christian, or Turkish, appear to me no other than human inventions set up to terrify and enslave mankind, and monopolise power and profit.

The first part of the *Age of Reason* is far from being Paine's strongest work, and some of its faults may, perhaps, be ascribed to the haste with which it was completed, late in 1793, so that it might be handed over for publication before a half-expected order for arrest, engineered by Robespierre, could be executed.[1] Yet hasty though the writing was, and Paine acknowledged later that he had attacked Bible and Testament without having a copy by him, the *Age of Reason* made plenty of noise in the world and provoked much angry retort from Christian controversialists. Some of Paine's ex-associates in the British Reform camp, indeed, tried hard not to damn him too hard, even when they were ministers of religion. Here, for example, is the theology critic of the *New Annual Register* for 1794 opening his remarks on the controversy, excited by Paine:[2]

The *Age of Reason* . . . is a bold and undisguised attack upon Revelation, and especially upon Christianity, drawn up in that blunt and popular manner, which has given such celebrity to the author's political writings. It abounds in forcible but unsupported assertions, which, by the ignorant and half thinking may be mistaken for arguments; but they must be persons of such descriptions only, who, after attentively

[1] From Paine's own Preface to the *Age of Reason, Part the Second.*

[2] *New Annual Register*, 1794, Domestic Literature, pp. 176–7.

perusing his work, can give Mr. Paine any credit for a tolerable acquaintance with history, or for that erudition and critical skill which were necessary to qualify him for such a discussion. To the greater part of what he says in defence of natural religion, there are few if any christians who will object. And we think it calculated to have good effects on those uninstructed men, who have been seduced into infidelity, and who are in danger of becoming indifferent to all religion and moral obligation. His strictures on the evidence of revelation are pert and flimsy, and such as, in a variety of shapes, have been frequently detailed, and as frequently answered. In the objections which Mr. Paine urges to the opinions disseminated throughout the Old and New Testaments, we cannot vindicate him from the charge of gross disingenuousness. . . . His work, however, has been serviceable to the cause of Revelation, in provoking discussion: and from the most liberal and unrestrained discussion, nothing can arise that will excite alarms in the mind of the consistent friend to truth.

All was still confidence, then, in the Christian camp which was, besides, about to get a very able piece of Christian apologetics a work with something of Paine's own pith, Paley's *View of the Evidences of Christianity*. But Paine, after suffering an imprisonment during which he had repeatedly expected death,[1] had become increasingly determined to do his utmost to free mankind from the wiles and stratagems of "priestcraft". And when Robespierre's death, in July 1794, served eventually to free Paine and restore him to an honoured place in the Convention, there was nothing that lay nearer his heart than the undertaking of a detailed attack upon the veracity and credibility of the Bible. The work, too, that was ready, in October 1795, as the *Age of Reason, Part the Second*, was a really dangerous attack upon Christianity despite its author's lack of any serious historical or critical equipment. It was Paine's whole contention that the exercise of mere common sense would expose the false pretences on which the Bible has, as he considered, been foisted upon mankind as the word of God, and Paine brought, of course, a good deal more than common sense to his examination of the Bible. He brought great shrewdness, very considerable reading, a large experience of men and affairs, a familiarity with the Bible text, dating back to his Quaker childhood in England, and, above all, a pen, capable of hard and direct hitting of a type that made its greatest appeal, as he knew, to the plain man without

[1] Preface to the *Age of Reason, Part the Second*: "I had then but little expectation of surviving, and those about me had less." His danger was not merely from Robespierre's suspicions but from a grave illness that overtook him during more than ten months in prison.

pretentions to scholarship or to special refinement.[1] The shortest quotation from the *Age of Reason, Part the Second*, must suffice to indicate for whom it was written, and the passion of the writing:[2]

> People in general know not what wickedness there is in this pretended word of God. Brought up in habits of superstition, they take it for granted that the Bible is true, and that it is good; they permit themselves not to doubt of it, and they carry the ideas they form of the benevolence of the Almighty to the book which they have been taught was written by his authority. Good heavens! it is quite another thing; it is a book of lies, wickedness and blasphemy; for what can be greater blasphemy, than to ascribe the wickedness of man to the orders of the Almighty?
>
> As to the fragments of morality that are irregularly and thinly scattered in those books, they make no part of this pretended thing, revealed religion. They are the natural dictates of conscience . . . and are nearly the same in all religions, and in all societies. The Testament teaches nothing new upon this subject; and where it attempts to exceed, it becomes mean and ridiculous. The doctrine of not retaliating injuries is much better expressed in Proverbs, which is a collection as well from the Gentiles as the Jews. . . . It is there said, Proverbs xxv, ver. 21, "*If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat, and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink*" but when it is said, as in the New Testament, "*If a man smite thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other also:*" it is assassinating the dignity of forbearance, and sinking man into a spaniel. *Loving enemies*, is another dogma of feigned morality.

There are a number of indications pointing to the fact that the *Age of Reason, Part the Second*, made as great a stir among the populace as the *Rights of Man*. Of the best-known working man of that day, the breeches-maker, Francis Place, it is reported by his biographer that he was much influenced by the *Age of Reason*.[3] Late in 1796, indeed, Place was arranging the production of a cheap edition of the book, and two thousand copies were speedily disposed of.[4] A later and larger edition was selling just as rapidly when Thomas Williams, the printer, was indicted for publishing a seditious and blasphemous libel, and ultimately sentenced to a year's imprisonment.[5] But Paine was pursued with sufficient

[1] *New Annual Register*, 1795, Domestic Literature, p. 198, was very bitter about the "indecency and scurrility" which Paine had shown in treating of such matters as the Virgin Birth.

[2] The first paragraph comes from the treatment of the Old Testament, and the second from the treatment of the New.

[3] Graham Wallas, *Life of Place*, p. 28.

[4] *Ibid.*

[5] *New Annual Register*, 1797, Principal Occurrences, pp. 102–7, under June 24th. Over five pages were devoted to an account of the trial.

hatred and venom for the rest of his life, and beyond the grave, too, to make it plain that the influence of the *Age of Reason* by no means ceased with Williams's imprisonment and that much clandestine circulation was going on. In 1796 when Bishop Watson of Llandaff thought fit to enter the lists against Paine with his *Apology for the Bible*, he had the good sense not to undervalue Paine's influence. In the very beginning of the work he talked of Paine's unsettling "the faith of thousands" and, towards its end, he used some even more revealing phrases.

"Infidelity," he wrote,[1] "is a rank weed, it threatens to overspread the land; its root is principally fixed amongst the great and opulent; but you are endeavouring to extend the malignity of its poison through all the classes of the community. There is a class of men, for whom I have the greatest respect, and whom I am anxious to preserve from the contamination of your religion—the merchants, manufacturers, [manual labourers] and tradesmen [craftsmen] of the kingdom. . . .

"If this little book should chance to fall into their hands after they have read yours, and they should think that any of your objections to the authority of the Bible have not been fully answered, I intreat them to attribute the omission to the brevity which I have studied; to my desire of avoiding learned disquisitions; to my inadvertency; to my inability; to any thing, rather than to an impossibility of completely obviating every difficulty you have brought forward. I address the same request to such of the youth of both sexes, as may unhappily have imbibed, from your writings, the poison of infidelity. . . .

The strongest point of Bishop Watson's oft-reprinted book was not its sometimes lame defence of Old Testament miracles nor yet its attempted justification of all the Canaanite blood shed by what was described as Divine decree. It was not even his attempt to defend the essential harmony of the Gospels against the inferences which Paine drew from the serious discrepancies he believed himself to have found. The strongest point of Bishop Watson's book was the tone of reasonable argument which he sought to adopt and the temper of Christian charity in which he conducted the controversy. This was unfortunately beyond the ability of nearly all other opponents of Paine, stung to the quick as they were by the tone of "scurrility" in which he had referred, for example, to the Virgin and to the Holy Ghost. Paine soon became the object of the bitterest hatred to the orthodox of Great Britain and America, and if the malice of hostile pseudo-biographies had already been

[1] *Apology for the Bible* (ed. 1834, T. Allman), pp. 138–9.

turned against him when he had merely been the author of *The Rights of Man, Part One*,[1] what that malice became after *The Age of Reason* may be left to the imagination.[2] Malice was taken a stage further after Paine's death in 1809 for, then, to crown all the misrepresented actions of his life, there were added the notorious death-bed scenes, representing him as calling desperately on his Saviour for salvation. The stage the blackening of Paine had reached, by 1812, the date of another blasphemy prosecution,[3] may, perhaps, best be represented by quoting from a *Times* correspondent of 1811, who supplied the journal's readers with the latest horrors yielded by Christian research in America.

"The blow he aimed at our Constitution," readers of *The Times* were told,[4] "fell to the ground, leaving no trace of its effects behind. The notions he propagated respecting religion (or rather, his endeavour to extirpate religion from the land) I am fearful still pervade the minds of too many. These infatuated people will do well to compare the close of his life with every other part of it. . . . The author of the sketch of his life, Mr. Cheetham of New York . . . seems to have got his intelligence from persons with whom Paine passed a great part of it. I cannot think of following our author through the whole of his life—that is pretty well known in England. . . . It appears he was soon tired of the Republic of France, though his former principles remained the same. He arrived at Baltimore on the 13th of October, 1802, in company with a woman named Madam Bonneville, whom he had seduced from her husband, and afterwards cruelly treated. At the first inn he went to, he was principally visited by the lower class of emigrants from England, Scotland and Ireland, no respectable person would suffer his approach. He drank grog in the tap-room with all . . . he was daily intoxicated. . . . Mrs. Dean, with whom he afterwards lodged, says he was deliberately and disgustingly filthy, choosing to perform the offices of nature in his bed. In the spring of 1804 he returned to his farm at New Rochelle: he engaged an old woman, Black Betty, who, it seems, was his match for drunkenness: they frequently, says our author, would

[1] The first hostile biography was that issued in London, in 1791, under the name of Francis Oldys. The real writer was a Government employee, George Chalmers.

[2] Cf. *North American Review*, July 1843, pp. 1–58, for W. B. Reed's paper on *The Life and Character of Thomas Paine*. "The time has long gone by", wrote Reed, "when the name of Paine would throw good and pious men into paroxysms of indignation."

[3] Cf. W. H. Wickwar, *The Struggle for the Freedom of the Press*, p. 73, for the conviction of Daniel Eaton for republishing, as Part III of the *Age of Reason*, the *Examination of the Passages in the New Testament Quoted from the Old and called Prophecies concerning Jesus Christ*.

[4] *The Times*, Tuesday, October 8, 1811.

lie prostrate on the same floor, quite drunk, swearing and threatening to fight. . . .

"His last moments cannot be better described than by quoting a passage from a letter. . . . We find him, on his death bed, calling upon that God, whose interposition he always denied—upon that Saviour whose existence he never would admit—even afraid of his own shadow. . . . It may be thought by some a want of charity in me to expose the failings of a departed man. I should think so, too, were it not to serve a peculiar purpose—to set at rest the minds of those he has disturbed—to expel the poison of infidelity from the land. In every point of view his false character appears. . . .

Useful and edifying as such accounts doubtless were to the immense religious forces, entrenched in church, chapel and Sunday school, they did not apparently carry conviction to all. For the natural leaders of the "labouring classes" throughout the country Paine's attraction continued so powerful that at every epoch when popular disorder or revolt was dreaded, in 1812, in 1816 and 1817, in 1819, and in 1830, much of the blame was laid on the spread of "infidelity among the lower orders". But, at this stage, it might be better, for a space, to leave the contest between "infidelity" and religion in order to bring the history of inter-denominational problems a little way forward from that complete refusal to alter a tittle of the Test and Corporation Acts which has been seen, registered in Parliament, in 1790 and 1791. That refusal proved decisive for nearly forty years, and during the whole of that period, the bulk of Protestant Dissenters, satisfied with the practical immunity from those Acts obtained under annual Acts of Indemnity, refrained from reopening the contest. It was to the Catholics, and especially to the Catholics of Ireland, that Anglicanism made the great mass of "concessions" granted during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic troubles. Of course, Irish Catholics had been so abased as a result of the "Glorious Revolution" that even after Catholic Relief Acts were passed at Dublin in 1792 and 1793,[1] under some stimulus from Pitt whom Burke was then tutoring in the necessity of winning Catholics from revolutionary temptations, the Catholic position remained degraded enough to cause the fatal Irish crisis of 1795. Under the

[1] Under the Irish Act of 1793 the vote was given to Catholics on the same terms with Protestants; they were permitted entry into all corporations except Trinity College; they might hold Dublin degrees when a new university college should have been founded; and all military and civil offices were thrown open to them except those of the first rank, specified in a detailed clause of the Bill.

Catholic Committee's Relief Bill of 1795, Irish Catholics would have obtained a much nearer approach to full civic equality with many new rights, including, of course, the right to sit in Parliament. To the "Ascendancy Party" in control of Irish Government, however, it seemed so certain that the proposed changes would produce a Catholic majority in the Dublin Parliament, which would then be absolutely uncontrollable either by themselves or any other nominees of London, that they procured the startling dismissal of a new Lord-Lieutenant, Earl Fitzwilliam, partially committed as he was to the Catholic Committee and to sweeping changes in the personnel of Irish Government.

There followed a period of increasing tension and violence, between the Protestant community, alarmed and resentful, and the Catholic majority, coming, for the most part, to rely more and more on French aid to achieve Emancipation. Finally, official brutalities and wild counter-plotting produced the catastrophes of the 1798 rebellion and its savage suppression.[1] There was now some justifiable hope in London that Protestants and Catholics could be brought to agree on an end of the Dublin Parliament and representation, instead, in a Parliament of the United Kingdom. Such a Parliament would apparently offer Ireland profitable association with a much wealthier community, would bring the whole strength of Britain to the defence of menaced Protestant "property" and yet would permit the bestowal of Catholic Emancipation upon a denomination whose representatives were certain to be heavily outvoted at Westminster on any sectarian controversy. In 1800, indeed, the Catholic majority saw the "independent" Dublin Parliament voted away by its Protestant masters without a pang. There had been the broadest hints of Catholic Emancipation to follow and, in addition, financial aid for the Catholic Church which should be wider in scope than the annual grant, made since 1795, to the Maynooth Seminary for training priests in Ireland instead of upon the suspect Continent.

How George III declined Pitt's plans and accepted his resignation is a familiar story. The Catholic claim to Emancipation became, thereafter, one of the principal dividing-lines in politics and, after Pitt's death, the "Ministry of all the Talents" was inevitably edged, despite the strict caution imposed by Fox while

[1] Cf. John Mitchel, *The History of Ireland*, for a typical statement of the Catholic case. It is, of course, partisan.

he was alive, into a direct collision with the King, entailing dismissal. The strongest Parliamentary force that arose from the triumphant "Protestant reaction" was Perceval, and the measure of his ultimate wisdom may be gauged from the pains he gave, year after year, to securing the complete reversal of the precedent which the "All the Talents" Government might be presumed to have set in attempting to conciliate the Catholics by raising the annual grant to Maynooth from £8000 to £13,000. By 1811 the outraged Catholic community was being driven to attempt a nation-wide petitioning counter-demonstration, and Perceval's Irish Government was ordering prosecutions for alleged infringements of the Irish Convention Act of 1793. Perceval's death in May 1812 seemed to offer a chance for the Parliamentary majority to retreat from the untenable position taken up by him, and the Session of 1813 saw, in fact, a notable effort to carry an Emancipation Bill supported from the Government side of the House by both Castlereagh and Canning.

But it was already too late to carry any Bill through Parliament save under the direct threat of civil war. For one thing, a popular Catholic movement had arisen in Ireland,[1] led by O'Connell and supported by a large part of the priesthood, which protested loudly enough against the cramping "safeguards", suggested to quieten Protestant alarms, that out-and-out opponents of Catholic Emancipation gained greatly therefrom. The Catholic view is easy enough to understand when it is found that even Canning insisted on adding a new safeguard to a Bill already chock-full of safeguards against the Catholic laity and clergy.[2] Canning's amendment, moreover, broke in upon one of the most treasured liberties of the Irish Catholic hierarchy since it proposed to give to a body of Protestant Commissioners, appointed by Parliament, a veto upon

[1] Cf. *The Times*, October 23, 1811, for the first meeting of a new General Committee, attended by 300 members from all over Ireland, which, in the presence of "numerous spectators", adopted a Petition and had adjourned within twenty-seven minutes in order to avoid dispersal as an illegal assembly.

[2] Cf. *Kendal Chronicle*, May 22, 1813. Even the original Bill might be held to interfere seriously with the internal arrangements of the Irish Catholic Church. Foreigners were to be excluded from all episcopal duties and functions as were also non-resident natives. There was imposed, besides, on Catholic clerics, a very far-flung set of oaths. They abjured regicidal powers for the Pope, the deposing powers of the Pope, British temporal powers for the Pope, the infallibility of the Pope. They swore to maintain the Protestant Succession, the present state of Protestant property, etc. etc., and, finally, to hold no communication, direct or indirect, with the see of Rome, affecting the Protestant Government or the Protestant Church. There were to be only ecclesiastical relations with Rome.

"the nomination of those Bishops and Apostolic Vicars of whose loyalty they entertain any doubt" and also to give the same Commissioners "power to inspect the papers and books connected with any nomination".[1] Yet when objections were raised in Ireland, that a limited Catholic Emancipation was not worth buying at anything like the suggested price, the "Protestants", backed from the Palace, which appeared to claim an hereditary right to oppose Emancipation, always seemed to be able to raise a victorious counter-clamour. The fact was that, thanks to the old prejudices against "Popery", many species of English Dissenters, and virtually all the Wesleyans and Scottish Presbyterians, could be brought to the aid of Anglican objectors to Emancipation.

The manifest hypocrisy of much of the successful strategy employed by the Tories, to rally a majority of the nation repeatedly to their side, ended by converting the whole "reforming" leadership to the most zealous support of Catholic Emancipation. Cobbett, for example, long treated Catholic Emancipation merely as the party cry by which the Whigs hoped to climb to power just as he treated the "anti-Popery" cry as the device by which the Tories retained office. But, at long last, Cobbett, too, was converted to the necessity for unmasking the Protestant "Reformation", almost as the first end in politics, and wrote a blistering denunciation of the greedy plunderers of Church lands, who had filled the "reforming" Tudor Courts. In his *Protestant "Reformation", Part Second* of 1827, Cobbett thus epitomised what he had done in the first part and now sought to do in the second.[2]

> The foregoing part of this Work contains the History of the Protestant "Reformation", the object of which was to show, and, I trust, it has shown most clearly, that that event "has impoverished and degraded the main body of the people". In speaking of the motives to the producing of the event, I said, that a fair and honest inquiry would teach us, that the chief of these motives was PLUNDER. The inquiry was fair and honest, and it has taught to every reader, that plunder was the main object, and, indeed, the only object with all the most active, and the most powerful, of the actors in that drama of devastation. The chief object of the present little volume is to show, as far as my means will enable me, the enormous extent and amount of that plunder . . . the good and thoughtless Protestant, who has been, as I was, duped from infancy to manhood; well, then, such good Protestant will ask: "Was not this a great deal too much to be devoured by a

[1] *Kendal Chronicle*, May 22, 1813.
[2] *Protestant "Reformation", Part Second*, Introduction.

parcel of lazy monks and priests and nuns, who did no work of any kind . . . and who kept the people in ignorance?" Now, my good brother Protestant . . . you cannot be more zealous or more loud upon this score than I was, for many years of my life; until I, at last, *examined for myself*, not the pages of lying, hired, place-hunting, pension-hunting, benefice-seeking, or romancing historians; but the pages of the Statute Book . . . keep the people in IGNORANCE? . . . Turn over the leaves, then, and come to the word OXFORD. . . . Oh! everlasting shame on the name of Protestant! Not one single *college, hall, or school*, founded by Protestants, not since the day that the word Protestant was pronounced in England! About twenty colleges in all, and all founded and endowed by Catholics. . . .

It is doubtful whether any single book could have done more than Cobbett's for Catholic Emancipation. That is why the High Tory *John Bull* was so bitter against the alleged combination of Jesuit and Atheist which got its triumph in 1829, a triumph which, according to the High Tories, was meant to prepare the way for the complete destruction of British institutions.

While the "Catholic question" had remained the leading politico-ecclesiastical problem of the nation, from 1801 to 1829, much else of the greatest significance was occurring in the religious field. Plebeian England, for example, found it possible to throw off, from 1807 onwards, yet another Protestant sect with a future, the Primitive Methodists, and yet to support, simultaneously, a number of successive waves of "Atheism". Of course, History has come to view the chapel-going of large masses of working-folk as the greatest single factor which prevented Revolution during the long French wars and the bad times immediately afterwards. But, certainly, the "Ranters" were, at first, very distasteful to the ruling classes and there were, for some time, suggestions for denying or restricting, in their regard, the benefits of the Toleration Act.[1] Yet the "Ranters' " great Camp Meetings, doubtless, diverted very much that would otherwise have produced "Peterloos", and a powerful "Ranter" preacher, vulgar and repulsive though he might seem to the parson, could prove a very much better antidote to Paine or Henry Hunt than the parson himself. Of the temper of the "Ranters" and their Camp Meetings some idea should be given, and here is Hugh Bourne, the father of

[1] Cf. *Hints on Toleration*, by Philagatharches, for some criticism of Lord Sidmouth's desire to put lay preaching under much tighter restriction (1811).

the sect, on the first Camp Meeting at Mow Cop, Cheshire, on May 31, 1807:[1]

> The people were nearly all under my eye, and I had not conceived that such a multitude was present. Thousands hearing with an attention solemn as death, presented a scene of the most sublime and awfully pleasing grandeur that my eyes ever beheld. The preachers seemed to be fired with an uncommon zeal, and an extraordinary unction attended their word, while tears were flowing and sinners trembling on every side . . . the work became general. Four preachers were preaching with all their might; here and there a company would be gathered round some penitent seeking salvation. Throughout the vast assembly the Lord was present to heal, and many were savingly converted.

There was not much room for Paine here except in an occasional penitent's confession of his sin of "infidelity" or "atheism".[2]

Yet the ever-present attraction of Paine for the keenest and most critical elements of the working class is not to be doubted. It is worth recording, for instance, how forcibly Richard Carlile, a tin-plate worker turned newsvendor by the post-Waterloo distress, was struck by his first perusal of Paine, so forcibly, indeed, as to be speedily turned into one of the principal anxieties of Government and organised Christianity for a dozen years. Describing himself, near the beginning of 1817, when he was about to set up as a Radical publisher, Carlile later wrote thus:[3]

> He had reached his twenty-seventh year without having heard or seen it asserted or insinuated that any religion was ill-founded . . . but having first met with a book called the *Age of Reason* in that year, and reading it as a matter of course, he found the validity of the Christian religion fairly investigated, and felt himself honestly and conscientiously impelled to support the negative side of the question.

In 1818, having graduated as publisher of *Sherwin's Political Register* and author-publisher of some "blasphemous" parodies in the style of Hone, Carlile was ready to reissue the *Age of Reason* as Paine's *Theological Works*. Indictment was soon announced in the Press, and not only helped to sell a first edition of a thousand copies at half a guinea each but to forward the sale of a second edition of three thousand. Moreover, the *Deist* was issued as a

[1] J. Ritson, *Romance of Primitive Methodism*, p. 64.

[2] *Ibid.*, for William Clowes, co-founder of Primitive Methodism, who had many other sins to confess.

[3] *Republican*, x, 92, as quoted by Wickwar's *Struggle for the Freedom of the Press*.

periodical, and the British public was given Elihu Palmer's *Principles of Nature*, a work of American "infidelity" only second in influence to Paine's. Increasing interest was aroused, Carlile's bold activities became the theme of London debating societies and provincial meetings, and the number of indictments mounted up. Finally, on October 12, 1819, some two months after "Peterloo", Carlile's trials for the blasphemy of reprinting Paine and Palmer began, and Carlile was in hopes of repeating the successes of Hone in 1817. A verdict of *Not Guilty*, too, he claimed, would, in the critical state of affairs after "Peterloo", help to "produce that change in the present corrupt system of Government which otherwise will not be effected, without all the horrors of an appeal to force".

Carlile's forensic talents were too poor, and the fright of the possessing classes too real, for Carlile to achieve the *Not Guilty* verdicts he had hoped for. Instead, he was sentenced to two years imprisonment and a £1000 fine for republishing the *Age of Reason*, one year's imprisonment and £500 fine for republishing the *Principles of Nature*, and, finally, before leaving prison, to find his own security in £1000 and two others in £100 each that he would maintain good behaviour for the term of his natural life.[1] It was doubtless hoped to silence Carlile for ever, but helped by the gaol regulations of that day and by the support of wife, sister, shop-boys, and a squad of volunteers, willing to face imprisonment, Carlile succeeded in having the "Temple of Reason" in Fleet Street kept open, the *Republican* continuously published, and Tories themselves made ashamed of sentencing Mrs. and Miss Carlile and their shop-boys. By 1825, moreover, Carlile's own continued incarceration in Dorchester Goal for inability to pay the fines and find the sureties, imposed upon him beyond the three years' imprisonment, had become a national scandal, and Ministers found it advisable to recommend his unconditional release after he had been in prison for nearly six years.[2] The total effect of the case can hardly have been to help "religion" in the old, hard, and narrow sense. And Carlile's name had undoubtedly been given a notoriety among the poor which made him doubly dangerous in the regular "infidel" campaigning which he attempted both before and during the Parliamentary Reform excitements of

[1] *Annual Register*, 1819, Chronicle, November.

[2] W. H. Wickwar's *The Struggle for the Freedom of the Press* is very fully documented.

1830. There had, in fact, never before been seen in England such "infidel" meetings as those addressed round the country by Carlile and the ex-clergyman, Robert Taylor.[1] The *Quarterly Review* certainly became most excited when, in the explosive winter of 1830–1, Carlile and Taylor seemed to have established a permanent school of "blasphemy" at the Rotunda.[2] Carlile and Taylor were both imprisoned during the course of 1831,[3] but, in a sense, their work was done for them by the Bishops themselves when, by a large majority, they resisted the Reform Bill. For the rest of the century almost, the word Bishop, uttered at a working-class meeting, produced on some the fabled effect of the red rag to a bull.

The dangerous anti-clerical tone, that was destined to reign so long among the British poor, had, of course, many more roots than the mere propaganda of Carlile or even of Paine. The Dissenters, for instance, still had a multitude of grievances from Church rates to churchyard burial fees, and the Catholics, especially in Ireland, had more.[4] But possibly the most inflammatory feeling against the Church was aroused by its vast and ill-distributed wealth, centred so often, it seemed, in the hands that did least of its daily work and that evaded, very largely, even the modest sacrifices that would enable Church work to be adequately extended to the new manufacturing districts and populations.[5] When, in 1831, a second edition of the *Extraordinary Black Book* of 1820–3 seemed to be called for, exposing sinecurism and extravagance, it was Church conditions in England and Ireland that were first placed

[1] J. M. Wheeler, *Biographical Dictionary of Freethinkers*, p. 312.

[2] *Quarterly Review*, January 1831, pp. 299–300.

[3] Taylor for the discourses, delivered in full canonicals, and published in *The Devil's Pulpit*. His sentence was two years.

[4] *The Extraordinary Black Book or Reformers' Bible* (2nd ed., 1831), p. 107: "The clergy are not allowed to officiate in any place with steeple or bells; they are prohibited from appearing abroad in the costume of their order; they cannot be guardians. . . . No Catholic in Ireland is allowed for his defence to have arms in his house, unless he have a freehold of £10 a year or £300 personal property. And though he is liable to parish cess, he is disabled from voting at vestries, on questions relating to repairs of churches." This was, of course, even after the Catholic Relief Act of 1829 which left some of the old Statutes undisturbed.

[5] *Ibid.*, pp. 46–7, for complaint of the £1,200,000 already found from the taxes in aid of Church-building begun under the Act of 1818. "Had the rich clergy", it was added, "contributed their just share to the First Fruits Fund there would have been no necessity for imposing this additional tax on the public. But the first out-lay is far from being the worst. . . . All those new churches and chapels will have to be kept in repair by rates levied on the parishioners—dissenters as well as churchmen. . . . Then there is the stipends of ministers, clerks, beadles. . . ."

under attack.[1] And the writer, apparently a professing Protestant, concluded thus:[2]

> If such ecclesiastical establishments as we have exposed be much longer tolerated in their existing state, the people will evince a patience and fatuity far exceeding any previous estimate. No doubt there are mysteries in the art of governing . . . that have not yet been discovered. It is impossible to foresee what unheard of wiles, delusions, and influence, Corruption may bring into play to stifle the claims of truth and justice. A nation, which, from groundless fears of change, was deluded into the support of a thirty years' war against human rights and happiness . . . may, by some new fascination, be brought to tolerate a church that absorbs annually ELEVEN MILLIONS of public income, ostensibly for religion, though it is religion's most dangerous foe, and not one hundredth part of which rewards the labours of those really engaged in clerical duty. . . . Secular abuses sink almost into insignificance when compared with those of our church-establishment . . . in Ireland. . . . If the tithe and ecclesiastical estates of that country do not soon receive a more beneficial application, to a certainty they will, ere long, devolve to the Catholic priesthood. The ties which connect the two countries are daily becoming weaker, and a foreign war or other favourable juncture . . . and a numerous and discontented population, may soon effect an eternal separation.

One further problem for "Religion", that was arising by 1830, was the advance of Geology. All the familiar schemes of creation, based on Genesis, and all the conceptions of mankind, as, perhaps, only 5600 years old,[3] were too obviously contradicted, in the eyes of really serious students, by the growing weight of evidence from fossil remains and by the growing conviction of the immense periods of time that had gone to the shaping of the earth. Charles Lyell's *Principles of Geology*, of 1830–2, broke new ground authoritatively when insisting that the same aqueous and igneous agents of change that could be observed at work every day must be regarded as the main agents of change, not the sudden cataclysms that had been assumed in an effort to explain mountains, seas, valleys and fossils, produced in a few thousand years of history.[4] Lyell was too cautious to challenge the theologians

[1] *Ibid.*, pp. 1–117.

[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 112–13.

[3] Dr. Hales's *New Analysis of Chronology*, i, 3, reported 120 different dates for the Creation, ranging from 6984 to 3616 B.C. and, for the Noachian Deluge, fifteen different dates between the years 3246 and 2104 B.C. The Noachian Deluge, of course, played an essential part in much of the theological reasoning upon rocks and fossils.

[4] Lyell's subtitle was: *Attempt to Explain the Former Changes of the Earth's Surface by Reference to Causes now in Action.*

directly or to point out how much less comfort they would derive from his views than from Cuvier's, the great scientist of the age that had just passed. Never again would scientific leaders write, like Cuvier:[1]

> In conclusion, if there be anything determined in geology, it is that the surface of our globe has been subjected to a revolution within 5000 years, and that this revolution buried the countries formerly inhabited by man and modern animals and left the bottom of the former sea dry as a habitation for the few individuals it spared. Consequently, our present human societies have arisen since this catastrophe.
>
> But the countries now inhabited had been inhabited before, as fossils show, by animals if not by mankind, and had been overwhelmed by a previous deluge; and, judging by the different orders of animal fossils we find, they had perhaps undergone two or three irruptions of the sea.

Cuvier's scientific conscience was obviously at work in the second paragraph though, even there, it could be "harmonised" with Scripture. That is, perhaps, why the "infidelity" of the streets was not yet using geological arguments in 1830.

It was Education that was fated to become the principal wrestling-ground between the Church and its opponents during the greater part of the nineteenth century. And as the contention was already well-established by 1830, this chapter might well be closed by the briefest review of how the contention had arisen and developed. In the early years of the nineteenth century, a philanthropic Committee had been organised, mostly by Dissenters from among the Friends, to forward the plans of Joseph Lancaster for spreading elementary education rapidly and cheaply among the poor. At first Authority smiled upon the venture and, for a time, it was even able to assume the style of the Royal Lancasterian Association. But the Church became increasingly suspicious of the Dissenting and "infidel" elements allegedly in control of the Association and, in 1811, founded its own "National Society for Promoting the Education of the Poor in the Principles of the Established Church throughout England and Wales". When the Lancasterians reorganised themselves, in 1813, as the British and Foreign School Society, a rivalry of some historic importance commenced, and to begin with, at any rate, the British and Foreign School Society, receiving the support of Bentham, Henry

[1] From the *Discours sur les Révolutions de la Surface du Globe*. The summarisation used is from the *Outline of Great Books*.

Brougham, James Mill and Place, drew on greater intellects if on smaller funds than the National Society.[1]

Church suspicions and fears were destined to spread to other education spheres during the 1820's. The growth of Mechanics' Institutes, for example, after Dr. Birkbeck's foundation of the London Mechanics' Institute in 1823, was viewed, in some Church quarters, with the utmost distaste and, it is plain, that fears of their developing into centres of "infidelity" was partly responsible. There was even heartier dislike of another Radical education activity, the finally successful attempt to found a University College in London, where education might be cheaper and more satisfactory than that provided at Oxford and Cambridge. The fact that Hume and Brougham were the Parliamentary representatives of the University of London idea, that Bentham and James Mill gave it their blessing and support, and that the whole middle-class of London was strongly tempted to take up shares, which would enable them to send their sons to the institution, soon began to give concern to the Church. It was being made almost the foundation principle of the new institution that, as the sons of men of all denominations, Jew included, were to sit side by side in the class-rooms, there would be no denominational religious instruction as such, no College chapel and no College services.[2] To the zealots of the Church of England, a veritable seminary of Godlessness seemed about to be set up in the Metropolis, and the loudest alarms were sounded. The alarms of the Church were to have good consequences as well as bad. King's College, London, was, for instance, soon being projected as a rival to University College in seeking the favour of London parents, and the Durham University, too, in the north-east, owed its creation, at least partly, to the new anxiety and watchfulness of the Church.

But the Church did not confine its defence to counter-foundation, and some of its defenders were unwise enough to mock at the "new Cockney University" and to exult over its inability to grant academic degrees, an inability which they vowed should be permanent. There was no better way of forcing the question of a

[1] Cf. Graham Wallas, *Life of Francis Place*, pp. 93–111.

[2] The wealthy Jewish financier, Isaac Lyon Goldsmid, did a great deal for the College and played a leading part in its early affairs. And when King's College came to be founded as University College's Anglican rival, the religious side was specially stressed by making the Archbishop of Canterbury, the College Visitor, and by putting Religious Instruction at the head of the list of College Subjects.

degree-granting Charter for the University of London into the agenda of the Age of Reform than such "Church and King" writing, from *John Bull*, as this:[1]

> Mr. Brougham in returning thanks to the subscribers of the Joint Stock Company present, observed—we believe gravely—that Dr. Lushington in the morning . . . had defended the nature and object of the Cockney College, in a manner "which shewed that it was not intended to *injure* or *interfere* with the two Universities of England!" Why, who in the name of wonder ever could for a moment imagine that it was? A humbug joint stock subscription school for Cockney boys, without the power of granting degrees or affording honours or distinctions, got up in the bubble season in shares sold (if they ever *are* sold) by stockbrokers, and billbrokers and Jew-brokers . . . to injure or interfere with Oxford or Cambridge? . . . The influence of the Cockney College will extend only over the sons and nephews and first cousins of the shareholders, who will be glad to get "*hedication*" for the youngsters in return for their "instalments" and rejoice to take out their capital in kind.
>
> It will be observed that the joint stock company have advertised for *tenders* from candidates in all branches of science; and have to suit the taste of those who are the prime movers and projectors of the scheme, carefully omitted the slightest mention of DIVINITY or THEOLOGY—RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION BEING MOST STUDIOUSLY OMITTED IN THE ARRANGEMENT OF THE UNDERTAKING.

It was the same spirit as asserted that "the EDINBURGH REVIEW, that prolific parent of all that is base in principle and mischievous in morals, was originally established for the purpose of conveying the poison of French philosophism to the hearts of the British people".[2] But mere abuse, however fluent, would no longer serve.

[1] *John Bull*, May 6, 1827. [2] *Ibid.*, June 3rd.

CHAPTER XXV

REVOLUTIONARY THINKING ON PROPERTY, POPULATION AND THE FAMILY

"The superstitious awe, the enslaving reverence, that formerly surrounded affluence, is passing away in all countries, and leaving the possessor of property to the convulsion of accidents. When wealth and splendour, instead of fascinating the multitude, excite emotions of disgust; when, instead of drawing forth admiration, it is beheld as an insult upon wretchedness; when the ostentatious appearance it makes serves to call the right of it in question, the case of property becomes critical, and it is only in a system of justice that the possessor can contemplate security."

Paine's *Agrarian Justice* (Published in 1797 in French at Paris; an English version was soon available).

"All schemes of equality which have been proposed are bound to fail, because the motive to the preventive check of moral restraint is destroyed by equality and community of goods. As all would be equal and in similar circumstances, there would be no reason why one person should think himself obliged to practise the duty of restraint more than another. And how could a man be compelled to such restraint? The operation of this natural check of moral restraint depends exclusively upon the laws of property and succession; and in a state of equality and community of property could only be replaced by some artificial regulation of a very different stamp, and a much more unnatural character."

Malthus's *On the Principle of Population.* Abridgement of the argument against a Communist society from *Outline of Great Books.*

"Babeuf attempted to combine a numerous people into one single and grand community; Owen, placed in other circumstances, would multiply in a country small communities, which afterwards united by a general bond, might become, as it were, so many individuals of one great family. Babeuf wished his friends to seize on the supreme authority, as by its influence he hoped to effectuate the reforms they had projected; Owen calculates on success by preaching and by example. May he show to the world that wisdom can operate so vast a good without the aid of authority! May he, above all, be

spared the grief of seeing his noble efforts fail, and furnishing, by an unsuccessful experience, the advocates of equality with an argument against the possibility of establishing in any manner, a social equality, to which violent passions oppose so formidable a resistance, and which, as appeared in our time, could only be the result of a strong political commotion amongst civilised nations."

From Buonarroti's *History of Babeuf's Conspiracy for Equality* (Brussels, 1828; London translation, 1836).

No literary result of the French Revolution was, in England, more important than Paine's issue in February 1792, of the *Rights of Man, Part the Second.* The political Republicanism advocated in the book, "extreme" though it was for its own day, excites altogether less interest in the modern reader than a number of suggested reforms, singularly prophetic of the courses Society was to take in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The whole problem of the progressive income-tax, graduated to appropriate, for the public, an increasing share of private incomes as they grew larger, may be found treated by Paine in the following way:[1]

A Tax on all estates of the clear annual value of £50 and up

	s.	*d.*	
To £500	0	3	per pound
From £500 to £1.000.....	0	6	,, ,,
On the second thousand ...	0	9	,, ,,
On the third thousand	1	0	,, ,,
On the fourth thousand....	1	6	,, ,,
On the fifth thousand.....	2	0	,, ,,
On the sixth thousand	3	0	,, ,,
On the seventh thousand...	4	0	,, ,,
On the eighth thousand....	5	0	,, ,,
On the ninth thousand.....	6	0	,, ,,
On the tenth thousand.....	7	0	,, ,,
On the eleventh thousand ..	8	0	,, ,,
On the twelfth thousand ...	9	0	,, ,,
On the thirteenth thousand.	10	0	,, ,,
On the fourteenth thousand.	11	0	,, ,,
On the fifteenth thousand ..	12	0	,, ,,
On the sixteenth thousand..	13	0	,, ,,
On the seventeenth thousand	14	0	,, ,,
On the eighteenth thousand	15	0	,, ,,
On the nineteenth thousand.	16	0	,, ,,
On the twentieth thousand.	17	0	,, ,,
On the twenty-first thousand	18	0	,, ,,
On the 22nd thousand	19	0	,, ,,
On the 23rd thousand	20	0	,, ,,

It took taxation policy, in the modern European State, about a hundred and fifty years to approach the solution sketched by Paine in 1792.

It was one of Paine's aims, in suggesting his progressive income-tax, to force the breaking-up of the great estates which exerted

[1] H. P. Bonner edition of *Rights of Man* (reprint 1934), p. 138.

such tremendous powers over whole countrysides. There would be no primogeniture where it entailed the payment of income-tax at 20*s.* 0*d.* in the pound or, perhaps, even 10*s.* 0*d.* in the pound. But Paine's progressive income-tax was intended to yield high revenues as well as to discourage the accumulation of excessive income-power in one hand. And it was, doubtless, the very attractive list of benefits which Paine suggested as providable from his income-tax revenue that gave the *Rights of Man* its tremendous hold, for a century, on the affections of the poor.[1] This list of benefits again illustrates Paine's almost uncanny power of anticipating some of the lines of nineteenth- and twentieth-century "progress". There were to be children's allowances of £4 per annum for children under 14 (with some extra expenditure for their education); there were to be £6 per annum pensions for the ageing, when between 50 and 60, and £10 per annum pensions afterwards; there was to be a maternity-benefit of 20*s.* 0*d.* and a wedding-benefit of a similar sum. Paine even remembered to provide a species of funeral benefit for workmen dying "on the tramp" and to make provision also for the special problem of destitution in the capital. And still the list of benefits was not exhausted, for, having provided for the poor from the income-tax, Paine meant to end Poor Rates and to go on, besides, to sweep away the House and Window Taxes, to increase the remuneration of underpaid revenue officers, and to find a little extra for the soldiers. Paine's experience of the workaday world and its anxieties was obviously extensive.

In a publication of 1797 Paine came to deal afresh with some of the special property problems he had raised in the *Rights of Man*. In writing *Agrarian Justice* he was impelled by the need he felt to oppose the sophisms of Bishop Watson's much-applauded sermon, *The Wisdom and Goodness of God in having made both Rich and Poor*.[2] Repeatedly Paine insisted that, in civilised life, the contrast between the "affluence" of the rich and the wretchedness of the poor had become much greater than it could ever have been

[1] Continuous reprinting of the *Rights of Man* was still going on a century after its first appearance. Thus a Freethought Publishing Company's edition was dated 1883, J. M. Wheeler's 1891, and M. D. Conway's 1894.

[2] Cf. Preface to *Agrarian Justice*. The sermon-preacher was the same Bishop Watson who wrote *Apology for the Bible*. Paine held of Watson: "Instead of preaching to encourage one part of mankind in insolence . . . it would be better that the Priests employed their time to render the condition of man less miserable than it is."

in the "natural state" when all were joint proprietors of the earth. The plight of the poor in the civilised state was, according to Paine, the direct result of having allowed the land to become privately appropriated without arranging some scheme of compensation for those who had to face life landless. But Paine did not propose to end private property in land, an institution which he was prepared to accept as having grown up, in the first place, not as the result of successful violence or legal chicane, but as a consequence of "the impossibility of separating the improvement made by cultivation from the earth itself upon which that improvement was made". Paine wanted to find compensation for the poor, not by re-declaring the land the common property of the human race but by according them, from funds to be raised from Property Inheritance Duties, an important scheme of benefits. Property passing to near kin was to pay a 10 per cent Inheritance Duty, there was to be added Duty where the kinship of the inheritor was distant or non-existent, and from the sum raised Paine calculated that there might not only be enough to offer Old Age Pensions of £10 a year at 50 but that a capital sum of £15 could be given to all young people on attaining the age of 21 in lieu of their lost right of access to the soil. Two young people deciding to marry at 21 would, accordingly, start life with a capital endowment of £30; this sum would provide a cow and the implements for farming a few acres; and the couple would be put in the way of becoming useful and profitable citizens instead of burthens upon society, breeding children likely to be more wretched than themselves. Paine already saw, with a distinctness fully anticipating Marx and Engels, a frightening vision of the increasing proletarianisation of the poor unless some remedy like his were applied. To quote his own words:[1]

> The rugged face of society, chequered with the extremes of affluence and of want, proves that some extraordinary violence has been committed upon it, and calls on justice for redress. The great mass of the poor, in all countries, are become an hereditary race, and it is next to impossible for them to get out of that state of themselves. It ought also to be observed, that this mass increases in all the countries that are called civilised. More persons fall annually into it, than get out of it.

Paine insisted repeatedly that he had no enmity to property as

[1] (Bohn's Popular Library edition) *Pioneers of Land Reform*, p. 197.

such, and that one of the advantages of his plan was that the compensations, provided for the poor, would make all property safer and more secure.[1] Paine, in fact, was to be hotly criticised by some extremists for his too tender attitude towards the landlords,[2] and he felt, too, that he had to justify the collection of Inheritance Tax from Personal Property as well as Landed though his basic argument had turned, so far, only on the compensation properly requirable from Landed Property. It was to give Paine an added hold on the poor, a hold demonstrated, for example, by the efforts made in the London Corresponding Society to publish the *Agrarian Justice* cheaply and extensively,[3] that Paine's remarks on the accumulation of Personal Property anticipated, once more, some of the most characteristic "popular" theses of the nineteenth century. Here is Paine's argument on the incidence of the Inheritance Tax:[4]

The reason for making it upon land is already explained; and the reason for taking personal property into the calculation, is equally well founded, though on a different principle. Land, as before said, is the free gift of the Creator in common to the human race. Personal property is the *effect of Society*; and it is as impossible for an individual to acquire personal property without the aid of Society, as it is for him to make land originally. Separate an individual from society, and give him an island or a continent to possess, and he cannot acquire personal property. He cannot become rich. . . . All accumulation, therefore, of personal property, beyond what a man's own hands produce, is derived to him from living in Society; and he owes, on every principle of justice, of gratitude, and of civilisation, a part of that accumulation back again to society from whence the whole came. This is putting the matter on a general principle, and perhaps it is best to do so; for if we examine the case minutely, it will be found that the accumulation of personal property is, in many instances, the effects of paying too little for the labour that produced it; the consequence of which is, that the working hand perishes in old age, and the employer abounds in affluence. It is, perhaps, impossible to proportion exactly the price of labour to the

[1] Cf. (Bohn's Popular Library edition) *Pioneers of Land Reform*, p. 195: "Though I care as little about riches as any man, I am a friend to riches, because they are capable of good. I care not how affluent some may be, provided none be miserable in consequence of it."

[2] Thomas Spence held in his *Rights of Infants* (1797) that Paine had virtually surrendered all the inalienable rights of access to the soil, on the part of all coming generations. Spence also criticized Paine in a pamphlet of 1796, entitled *The End of Oppression*.

[3] An early copy of *Agrarian Justice* was found to bear the name of J. Ashley of the Corresponding Society as publisher.

[4] (Bohn's Popular Library edition) *Pioneers of Land Reform*, pp. 199–200.

profits it produces; and it will also be said, as an apology for injustice, that were a workman to receive an increase of wages daily, he would not save it against old age, nor be much the better for it in the interim. Make, then, Society the treasurer to guard it for him in a common fund; for it is no reason that because he might not make a good use of it for himself, that another shall take it.

All Paine's writing, however outmoded may now be the theoretical basis on which his argument is conducted (the Earth, for example, as the Creator's common gift to all mankind), succeeds in conveying the sharp stab of actuality to the reader. That is the authentic mark of genius, and it is a mark that is certainly not so visible in another piece of British writing on Property with, perhaps, greater intellectual pretensions, the Property section of William Godwin's *Political Justice*, a work that made a great stir on its first appearance in 1793.[1] Godwin's greatest innovation, of course, was his advocacy of a *simple form of society without government*, and when he came to treat of the provision for the material basis of such a society, he built up a picture of an Anarchist Commonwealth which still has some supporters today. He hoped, with apparent sincerity, that the rapid progress of education and civilisation would induce the rich to refrain from opposition to the introduction of such a Commonwealth, and the more especially as the poor would have been taught to refrain from premature violence. Superior need was to be the recognised basis, after the advent of the Commonwealth, for any claim to chattels or food, and of the relatively slight quantity of manual labour, that would suffice to produce a sufficiency of chattels and food if life and society were simplified and everyone worked, Godwin was prepared to argue thus with the rich:[2]

What is this quantity of exertion from which we are supposing many members of the community to shrink? It is so light a burden as rather to assume the appearance of agreeable relaxation and gentle exercise, than of labour. In this community scarcely any can be expected in

[1] H. S. Salt's edition of Godwin's *Political Justice* (*On Property*) quotes Hazlitt describing the temporary effect of Godwin's book thus: "No work in our time gave such a blow to the philosophical mind of the country as Godwin's celebrated *Enquiry concerning Political Justice*. Tom Paine was considered for the time as a Tom Fool to him; Paley an old woman; Edmund Burke a flashy sophist. Truth, moral truth, it was supposed, had here taken up its abode, and these were the oracles of thought."

[2] H. S. Salt's edition, 1890, Godwin's *Political Justice* (*On Property*), pp. 71 et sqq.

consequence of their situation or avocations to consider themselves as exempted from manual industry. There will be no rich men to recline in indolence.... The mathematician, the poet, and the philosopher will derive a new stock of cheerfulness and energy from the recurring labour that makes them feel they are men. There will be no persons employed in the manufacture of trinkets and luxuries; and none in directing the wheels of the complicated machine of government.... There will be neither fleets nor armies, neither courtiers nor footmen. It is the unnecessary employments that at present occupy the great mass of the inhabitants of every civilised nation, while the peasant labours incessantly to maintain them in a state more pernicious than idleness....

... From the sketch which has been here given it seems by no means impossible that the labour of every twentieth man in the community would be sufficient to maintain the rest in all the abolute necessaries of human life. If then this labour, instead of being performed by so small a number, were amicably divided among them all, it would occupy the twentieth part of every man's time.... Who is there that would shrink from this degree of industry?

There are, naturally, a good many unwarranted Utopian assumptions in writing of this kind, and the matter was no better when Godwin, in another very unorthodox section, discussed the relations of the sexes.[1] Of course, there was to be no marriage in his Anarchist Utopia; intimate relations between two people would continue only so long as they were desired by both; and in Godwin's quaint words, the "search after virtue and worth" in possible new partners was to be "incessant". It is almost ludicrous to find Godwin prepared to talk away not merely the ideas of his age but the strongest passions of mankind. Jealousy was merely "the most odious of all monopolies"; the definite paternity of children needed not to be established when family pride should have been abolished; and "reasonable men" would "propagate their species, not because a certain sensible pleasure is annexed to this action, but because it is right the species should be propagated". Shocked as were some of the moralists and divines by Godwin, he was a good deal less dangerous than Paine.

It is, perhaps, worth mentioning in passing that Godwin's wife-to-be, Mary Wollstonecraft, had already dealt, in demurer revolutionary style, with the relations between the sexes. Her *Vindication of the Rights of Women*, published in 1792, was a protest against the denial to women of equal intellectual training

[1] *Political Justice*, Book VIII, Chapter VI.

and opportunity with men, and from women's consequent relegation to the cultivation of the social prettinesses and frivolities in order to win a career through marriage, she was prepared to trace many of the worst evils of Society. It was an interesting anticipation of much of the Women's Rights movement of a century later but never cut as deep as Godwin at his best. Godwin's discussion of Population, for example, made a profound impression on the youthful Malthus—and it was Malthus's anxiety to state the case against Godwin's optimism that led to the famous *Essay on Population.* Godwin blamed the Property system for a European population that was only one-fifth of what it might be and spoke of it as "strangling a considerable portion of our children in their cradle" with all the contributions they might have made to life's value and happiness. He returned to the charge again when dealing with the objection that a Utopian Commonwealth would soon cease to be Utopian owing to "the excessive population that would arise".[1] The objection was almost an anticipation of Malthus's, and Godwin demolished it with some of the zeal of later anti-Malthusians, including Godwin himself:[2]

> Three-fourths of the habitable globe is now uncultivated. The parts already cultivated are capable of immeasurable improvement. Myriads of centuries of still increasing population may probably pass away, and the earth still be found sufficient for the subsistence of its inhabitants. Who can say how long the earth itself will survive the casualties of the planetary system? Who can say what remedies shall suggest themselves . . . of which we may yet at this time have not the slightest idea? It would be truly absurd for us to shrink from a scheme of essential benefit to mankind, lest they should be too happy, and by necessary consequence at some distant period too populous.

There were such results of Godwin's order of ideas as the attempt, engaged in both by Coleridge and Southey, to plan a "pantisocracy" which should be established on the Susquehanna river. And in France, among the extreme Jacobins, plotting the overthrow, in 1796, of the Thermidorians who had "betrayed" the Revolution, Babeuf built up a dangerous conspiracy which

[1] Godwin found the idea in Robert Wallace's *Various Prospects of Mankind, Nature and Providence, 1761.*

[2] In 1820 Godwin published *Of Population . . . in Answer to Mr. Malthus.* The quotation is from *Political Justice,* Book VIII, Chapter VII. The chapter's title is: "Of the Objection to this [Commonwealth] System from the Principle of Population".

was intended to present France with community of property and absolute equality among citizens.[1] There is some reason to see in Babeuf the first anticipation of modern Communism, and there are Englishmen prepared to assign almost a similar place to Thomas Spence, the impoverished pamphlet-seller who claimed to have been calling, since 1775, for the resumption, parish by parish, of the ownership of all land into the hands of the general body of inhabitants.[2] Spence regarded landlords as mere beneficiaries of ancient and unjust conquest; he had been imprisoned for seven months without trial in 1794, under Habeas Corpus Suspension; and, in 1801, was sentenced to twelve months' imprisonment more for having published the "seditious" *Restorer of Society to its Natural State.* A quotation must be given to suggest the "mischief" Spence had meant to do in the semi-famine conditions of 1800:[3]

> The unprecedented dearness of provisions, sets every head on devising how to find a Remedy. And as people impute much of the mischief to the manner Gentlemen now follow of letting their Lands in large Farms, they talk of having laws made to reduce Farms again to a moderate size. But this is reckoning without their Host. . . . Are not our Legislators all Landlords? And are they going to make Laws to restrict themselves in the management of their property? Believe it not. They find those rich Tenants both give them more Rent and pay more certainly than poor Men could. Neither bad seasons, nor accidents among Cattle, affect them. They are still able in spite of every mischance to pay, and also to hoard and keep up what they have, till they can get a price to their mind. All this the Landlord knows is for his advantage and makes him look on the increasing profits of the Farmer with pleasure, as he will be sure to advance his Rent in proportion at the expiration of his Lease. . . .
>
> It is childish therefore to expect ever to see Small Farms again, or ever to see anything else than the utmost screwing and grinding of the poor, till you quite overturn the present system of Landed Property. For they have got more completely into the spirit and power of oppression now than was ever known before, and they hold the people in defiance by means of their armed associations. They are now like a

[1] Though the *New Annual Register* for 1796 published a good deal, for example, about the Babeuf conspiracy, some of the full details were not known for over thirty years. One of Babeuf's admirers, Buonarroti, then published the *Conspiration pour l'Egalité dite de Babeuf*, a work subsequently rendered into English by Bronterre O'Brien, the Chartist.

[2] Spence seems to have lifted himself from the grimmest poverty, not by his pamphlets, but by selling political token dies of halfpenny and farthing size. His name and "Jacobin" subjects are still in the collectors' books.

[3] The pamphlet took the form of fourteen letters with a preface.

warlike enemy quartered upon us for the purpose of raising contributions, and William the Conqueror and his Normans were fools to them in the Art of fleecing. Therefore anything short of total Destruction of the power of these Samsons will not do . . . nothing less than the complete Extermination of the present system of holding Land in the manner I propose will ever bring the World again to a state worth living in.

But how is this mighty work to be done? I answer it must be done at once. For it will be sooner done at once than at twice or at an hundred times. For the public mind being suitably prepared by reading my little Tracts and conversing on the subject, a few Contingent Parishes have only to declare the land to be theirs and form a convention of Parochial Delegates. Other adjacent Parishes would immediately on being invited follow the example, and send also their Delegates and thus would a beautiful and powerful New Republic instantaneously arise in full vigour. The power and resources of War passing in this manner in a moment, into the hands of the People from the hands of their Tyrants, they, like sham Samsons would become weak and harmless as other Men.

Spence's four arrests and two considerable terms of imprisonment must be taken as evidence that Authority considered his Land Doctrine as very far from harmless in such crowded and poverty-stricken quarters as were the back streets of London's West End during the Revolutionary War.[1] It was here that Spence lived from 1792 until his death in 1814, it was here that he was buried, with some pomp, by his disciples and admirers,[2] and it was here, too, that a Spencean group remained to make a bold snatch at Ultra-Revolution during the great post-war distress at the end of 1816. It was, in fact, to the Spencean attempt to turn Henry Hunt's Spa-Fields meeting into the opening of a revolution that Spence owed the appearance of his name on the Statute Book, for one of the "Gag Acts" of 1817 specifically suppressed, among much else, "all societies or clubs calling themselves Spenceans or Spencean Philanthropists, and all other societies or clubs, by whatever name or description the same are called or known, who hold

[1] *Spence and his Political Works* (ed. Arthur W. Waters, 1917) gives Chancery Lane, Little Turnstile, Holborn, Oxford Street, and Castle St., Oxford St., as among his addresses at various times.

[2] A cutting from an unidentified newspaper under the date September 8, 1814, gives a short account of Spence and his funeral. "His remains," it states, "were attended by a numerous throng of political admirers. Appropriate medallions were distributed, and a pair of scales preceded his body, indicative of the justice of his views. One of his friends made an oration over his grave. . . . Upon Mr. Spence's principles, a sect was founded called the 'Spenceans'."

and profess, or shall hold and profess their objects and doctrines".[1] The Act does not seem to have prevented a last Spencean demonstration on June 21, 1819, the anniversary of Spence's birthday, and Spence's views were, in fact, taken on into the Chartist age by his faithful disciple and friend, Allen Davenport, who issued, in 1836, a short pamphlet entitled, *Life and Writings of Thomas Spence*.[2] But, in the nature of things, Spence's appeal, even more than Paine's, could only have been to the poor and illiterate, and only a successful revolution could have seen some direct legislative consequences. None of the plotting of 1816–20 showed the remotest hope of success, and so, what real legislative prospects there were of altering Land and Property conditions came to depend on the school of Political Economy, founded by Adam Smith and continued by Malthus, Ricardo, James Mill and J. R. McCulloch. It is to Malthus that it is first necessary to turn.

Malthus wrote his *Essay on the Principle of Population* (1798) during the years of deep distress among the English poor which resulted from the scarcities and high prices of the period of the Revolutionary War. Apart from war-conditions, the poor were badly affected by the decay of cottage-industries and by the enclosure of commons, so that, in 1795, there were cottage budgets published which showed that the economic position of the married labourer tended to become catastrophic after the appearance of a third child in the family.[3] Thereafter every succeeding child plunged the family into deeper distress and completer pauperisation, and, if this was the case in England, the position in Ireland was a great deal worse, the mass of the rapidly increasing population living there in conditions much more squalid than those of England.[4] The tendency to reproduction was, in fact, so strong, according to Malthus, as always to present almost every type of human society with the grave problem of population pressing too closely upon its means of subsistence. And this seemed to be true even of the society rapidly increasing its economic skill and resources for, at best, such increase would be

[1] From the 57 Geo. III, c. 19, s. 27, the *Act for more effectually preventing seditious meetings and assemblies.*

[2] A pamphlet of twenty-four pages.

[3] The most revealing book in this sphere was that of the Rev. David Davies, Rector of Barkham, Berkshire. He published family budgets compiled by him from among his own parishioners in his *The Case of Labourers in Husbandry stated and considered*—and things had grown worse since the budget-compilation.

[4] The full revelation did not come till the appearance of Edward Wakefield's *Ireland: statistical and political* (1812).

in arithmetical progression while the population increase, going on alongside, would tend to be in geometrical progression. Food stringency would eventually become severe, malnutrition and disease would produce fatal epidemics, and when vast populations had been swept away by these, a more favourable ratio between population and food resources would return for a time until this, in turn, deteriorated as a result of the increase of population called out by the more favourable conditions that had temporarily ruled.

With the examples of modern China and India before the eye, it is not easy to deny a great deal of validity to parts of Malthus's case. He did, too, allow for infanticide and "vice" as among the ways which had, historically, reduced the pressure of population on food supplies. But, as might be expected from a Christian clergyman, he preferred less objectionable checks, and his great panacea after 1803 was a prudential restraint which should delay marriages to a later age than had been customary hitherto among the labouring classes, at least. Marriages made at a later age would, of course, be less fruitful; there was likely, also, to be a firmer material foundation for family security in some accumulation of resources; and, finally, smaller and securer families would bring a labouring generation in a much better position to bargain for higher wages. It was, then, largely for the sake of the poor themselves that Malthus advanced his next and most hotly-debated thesis—that it would be to their ultimate interest to have a gradual end put to the existing system of poor laws which seemed to encourage over-population and, therefore, an overstocked labour-market, bringing misery and want to them all.[1]

Malthus's survey did not and could not take all population factors into account. The Industrial Revolution, for example, had already begun multiplying productivity, in a limited number of fields, a good deal faster than population, and much more was to come. The long train of transport inventions, too, was in motion which was to bring such floods of corn and meat into Western Europe, during the second half of the nineteenth century, in payment for manufactures and to take such floods of emigrants out. Finally, artificial birth control, of a modern type, was already

[1] Malthus, *Essay on the Principle of Population* (6th ed., 1826), ii, 319, for his strongest proposal: "I should propose a regulation to be made, declaring that no child born from any marriage taking place after the expiration of a year from the date of the law, and no child born two years from the same date, should ever be entitled to parish assistance."

beginning. Yet it was, perhaps, as well that knowledge of these relieving factors was withheld for, when the great post-war distress came after 1815 economic thinking was not tempted to treat it as a purely temporary phenomenon. Land, Corn Law, Population and Rent became the gravest themes of "classical" Political Economy, and a theory of rent was developed which had its special dangers for landowners.[1] The increase of population forced poorer and poorer lands into requisition for food-growing, and as the quality of the soil used fell, so the fortunate owners of superior soils could demand ever-rising rents. It was true that part of this rent might represent a mere return of interest on the capital expended on it. But the characteristic part of the rent—the part that kept on rising—and that was denominated the "economic rent" by Ricardo—represented increasing payment to the landlord for the use of land whose soil superiority grew more valuable as population increased and ever-inferior lands were brought under cultivation. Ricardo, in fact, seemed to show the rest of society how intolerably great might become the levy of the landlords in the course of the time, and he undoubtedly contributed to the anti-landlord atmosphere which was to characterise politics among the middle and lower classes for the next hundred years. James Mill, too, Ricardo's most important follower, was soon to enter the field with a famous suggestion that itself determined the course of much later politics. In James Mill's *Elements of Political Economy* (1821) what soon came to be called the "unearned increment of land values", increment that resulted from no application of capital or labour on the part of the landlord but that came only from the growth of population, was marked out as a very proper subject for special taxation.

The "classic" school of Political Economy unhesitatingly accepted the full Malthusian doctrine of population. The main hope of the labouring classes lay in the voluntary limitation of their numbers until capital was increasing a good deal faster than population. The working classes can hardly be blamed for finding Malthusianism, the prudential moral restraint preached by Malthus himself, a very uninviting life-prospect,[2] and Cobbett,

[1] Ricardo's *Principles of Political Economy and Taxation* (1817) was the work which set the rent theory of "classical" Political Economy circulating.

[2] G. Wallas, *Life of Francis Place*, p. 170, for a rueful admission by Place: "All were opposed to the Malthusian doctrine. . . . All disregarded the fact that the people had increased and were increasing, and over-running the means of subsistence."

who felt with them on this, was never tired of denouncing Parson Malthus and the whole race of "feelosofers" and political economists. But in the 1820's two "feelosofers" at least, the "infidel" James Mill and Francis Place, were feeling their way forward to something better for the young working-class couple, desirous of marriage, than asking them to exercise prudential moral restraint until they were thirty-five or forty. In 1822 Place issued, doubtless with some help from Mill, his *Illustrations and Proofs of the Principle of Population*, and it was in this book that the first open discussion began of the advisability of letting the working classes prevent over-population, not by the dangerous and almost impossible expedient of long delayed marriage, but by the far less objectionable method, it was claimed, of undertaking contraception, when proper, within marriage. Though Place's book gave no Birth Control instruction but merely discussed, in one section, its advisability,[1] the notion was found so profoundly shocking and disturbing to the most vocal elements of "public opinion", even on the "reforming" side, that Place long suffered under the reputation of being a "bold bad man". When, in 1831, Archibald Prentice, the leading figure in Manchester "reform" journalism arrived in the capital for some consultations of political importance, Bentham had to exercise a great deal of diplomacy to smooth the path for some co-operation between him and the "bold bad man".[2]

It may be, of course, that Prentice, like the modern historian of Birth Control, suspected Place, rather than Owen, of ultimate responsibility for the Birth Control handbills that were distributed in 1823, with some definite if rudimentary instruction in method.[3] There is no positive evidence that Robert Owen was, at this stage, interested in the matter though there is plenty of evidence that Place and James Mill were.[4] The next step in British Birth Control history was taken by one who must have been regarded by the "respectable", even on the reforming side, as a good deal bolder and a good deal worse than Place, the notorious "enemy of religion", Richard Carlile. His *Every Woman's Book* of 1826 undertook to help women to prevent conception, when proper, but the methods suggested would hardly have been physiologically

[1] *Illustrations and Proofs of the Principle of Population*, Section iii, chap. 5.
[2] G. Wallas, *Life of Francis Place*, pp. 81–2.
[3] Cf. Norman E. Himes in the *Lancet*, August 6, 1927.
[4] James Mill even ventured to drop a broad hint in his famous *Colonies* article for the supplement to the *Encyclopædia Britannica* of 1824.

effectual. And then, in 1831, came Robert Dale Owen's *Moral Physiology* and, in 1833, the even better known *Fruits of Philosophy*. The titles chosen for the two books deserve a little comment. In view of the furious antipathy certain to be aroused by this type of literature, it seemed wise to stress its moral purpose and to claim its intellectual descent from Malthus and the science of Political Economy. Yet it was, doubtless, true that the books sometimes got into the hands of those who were neither moral nor philosophical but merely seeking the gratification of "sinful lusts".

It is, perhaps, worth remarking at this stage that other friends of the poor were, not like Place, Mill, Carlile and Owen busy converting Malthus's prudential moral restraint into Birth Control, but were attacking the whole theoretical and statistical basis on which Malthus had erected his Population doctrine. Naturally, the religiously minded turned to Scripture and quoted against prudential moral restraint the command to "increase, multiply and replenish the earth".[1] And there were many Scripture passages enjoining care and charity for the poor which seemed poles apart, in spirit, from Malthus's objections to the Poor Law, and the obvious tendency of Malthus's thinking to provide the rich and comfortable with easy excuses for declining to help the unfortunate. But here, perhaps, it is more proper to refer, in detail, to Godwin's elaborate counter-attack upon Malthus seeing that Malthus's *Essay on Population* had originally been called out by a desire to prove that even if the Utopian Commonwealth, sketched by Godwin in the *Political Justice* of 1793, were set up, vice and misery would return in less than half a century from the tendency of population to double itself every twenty-five years, increasing by geometrical progression while resources, at best, increased by arithmetical progression. Malthus had obtained some support for the population-doubling tendency from United States statistics which appeared to show such a tendency operating constantly for well over a century. It was Godwin's contention that American marriages showed no obvious superiority in fertility to those in Europe; that, as in Europe, they needed a birth-rate of over four

[1] Cf. *Quarterly Review*, October 1821, p. 154, defending Malthus but admitting: "Mr. Malthus was assailed, with equal virulence, by the ignorant vulgar, and by those whose refined but irritable, minds lead them to contemplate with horror any wish to limit the number of human beings by which they had accustomed themselves to estimate the quantity of human happiness: it was thwarting, they said, the first purpose of Nature . . . and infringing the first command of Nature's God—to increase and multiply."

per marriage to allow population to advance; and that the obvious way to account for the growth of population in America was the steady tide of immigration. And, then, Godwin produced some very relevant counter-statistics from Sweden which did make a strong case for the contention that, in an old and settled country with no great tide of immigration beating upon it, the tendency had been for population to take over a century to double itself and that, during this century, the standard of comfort was rising all the time. Godwin's *Population* of 1820 had some incidental weaknesses of its own but an age, with good reason to fear population decline, is more likely to see its merits. From 1820, at any rate, there was some scientific basis for a challenge to Malthusianism and all its threats to the households of the poor.[1]

It is, perhaps, time to return to the "classical" Political Economy and to James Mill who, though regarding himself in this field as Ricardo's pupil, gave Political Economy, on Land and Population, so Radical a turn, in the one instance, to the taxation of Unearned Increment and, in the other, towards Birth Control. Another turn, more directly favourable to the claims of the labouring classes, had already been given by Ricardo, perhaps unintentionally, when treating the labour expended on the production of most types of marketed article as the principal ingredient of their exchange value and when going on, moreover, as was later complained, to slur over the proper nature of capital, all too frequently representing it, so it was lamented, as mere "accumulated labour".[2] The wages of labour, however, according to Ricardo, could never, over any considerable period, exceed the sum required to keep the class at its existing standards and in its existing numbers, and this "iron law of wages" as it came later to be called, contrasting so vividly with the merits of labour as the principal, nay, in some renderings, the only producer of value,[3] was bound to excite a demand for an altered system which should return to labour the

[1] Godwin, it may be noted had entrusted the mathematics of his argument to his friend, Booth, an accepted expert.

[2] Cf. *Encyclopædia Britannica* (9th ed., 1885), Vol. 19, p. 374: "Ricardo, however, constantly takes no notice of capital, mentioning labour alone . . . and seeks to justify his practice by treating capital as 'accumulated labour'; but this . . . has encouraged some socialistic errors."

[3] Cf. *Essay on Political Economy*, Supplement to the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Vol. 6, Part I, 1823, p. 234–5. The *Quarterly Review* took the Ricardian author to task for insisting so strongly "on labour being the only source of wealth" and asserting that "independently of labour, matter is rarely of any use whatever, and is never of any value" in justification of his thesis that even the earth "however paradoxical it may at first sight appear, is not a source of wealth".

whole produce of labour. Already by 1825 virtually the full demand had been raised in Thomas Hodgskin's *Labour Defended against the Claims of Capital or the Unproductiveness of Capital Proved* written under the pseudonym of "A Labourer" by one who had, indeed, to labour hard most of his life at the less remunerative sides of writing. It was a remarkable effort revealing, for example, the baselessness of the assumption of "classical" economics that employers supported their labourers for twelve months before there was any exchangeable value produced. In some instances where there was rapid turnover, even a weekly wage-earner, by advancing his employer the total cost of his maintenance for a week, would actually have, himself, supplied the whole capital necessary for his employer to turn several profits over, and this would, of course, have been even more the case where renumeration was dispensed, not at the end of a week, but at the end of a longer interval.[1] Then, even when turnover was slower, the labourer would not have been "supported" by the painful abstinence of his employer but rather by the credit advanced him on the basis of the labour already done by his workmen. It was the labourer's work, of course, that finally supported not only himself and his employer but the whole chain of credit-givers who had contributed nothing to actual production. Of the consequences on the labourer of this system of deductions from the produce of his labour on behalf of agencies that had little or no moral claim to share in the produce, Hodgskin wrote bitterly:

> . . . before a labourer can have a loaf of bread, he must give a quantity of labour more than the loaf costs by all that quantity which pays the profits of the farmer, the corn dealer, the miller, and the baker, with profit on all the buildings they use; and he must moreover pay with the produce of his labour the rent of the landlord. How much more labour a labourer must give to have a loaf of bread than the loaf cost, it is impossible for me to say. I should probably underrate it were I to state it at six times; or were I to say that the real cost of that loaf, for which the labourer must pay sixpence, is one penny.

Hodgskin was chosen lecturer at the London Mechanics' Institute and, perhaps, under persuasion from Place and the rest

[1] The proportion of the population then paid quarterly, half-yearly or even yearly was probably a good deal greater then than now. Moreover there was a good deal of work still done at home by the piece, and in these cases the labourer would have provided premises, too, and his family as assistants.

of Bentham's circle, somewhat attenuated his doctrine in the *Popular Political Economy* of 1827.[1] Yet the doctrine had already taken root enough to foster such writing as the *Labour Rewarded* of William Thompson, to supply additional fortification for the Owenite Socialism now beginning its permeation of the London working classes, and to last on to become one of the most significant sources of Karl Marx's thinking.[2] Robert Owen's activity was, of course, much better fitted than Hodgskin's to loom large in working men's eyes. Owen's New Lanark Cotton Mills had tended, after Waterloo, to become one of the show-places of British Industry where admiring visitors came to inspect, not only industrial methods, but the schools provided by the management for the workpeople's children, and the stores, buying wholesale and selling, to the workpeople, at cost price, all manner of goods, especially groceries.[3] Owen's notorious attack of 1817 on the existing religious systems of the world might have done him irretrievable harm with the bulk of the upper classes[4] but would hardly have affected his standing with operative leaders, deeply read in Tom Paine. These had come to be more and more affected by the views confidently set forth and perseveringly circulated in the "Report to the County of Lanark, of a plan for relieving public distress and removing discontent, by giving permanent productive employment to the poor and working classes; under arrangements which will essentially improve their character and ameliorate their condition, diminish the expenses of production and consumption, and create markets co-extensive with production. By Robert Owen, May 1, 1820." Working men thoroughly approved of a Report which opened with a call for great measures to be adopted by Parliament in order to prevent the existing distress and discontent from becoming chronic and drying up the resources of the Empire. They approved even more of such basic maxims as that, if manual labour were properly directed, its value could be

[1] Graham Wallas, *Life of Francis Place*, p. 268, for Place's attempt to prevent Hodgskin's election, despite a long-enduring friendship.

[2] Hodgskin is repeatedly referred to in *Das Kapital*.

[3] To confirm the accounts in Owen's *Autobiography*, there are Dr. Macnab's *The New Views of Mr. Owen of New Lanark, Impartially Considered*, and the *Reports* of a Leeds deputation of August 1819 and a Dublin inspection party of 1822. Cf. also *Hansard's Parliamentary Debates*, December 16, 1819.

[4] W. L. Sargant, *Robert Owen and his Social Philosophy*, pp. 119–33, for a full discussion, from the viewpoint of 1860, as to what had induced Owen to take this step at the second meeting he had called to consider his plans for meeting the post-war distress.

maintained for centuries to come; that Great Britain and its dependencies could, with proper management, support a vast increase of population; and that so far from needing to fear over-population, Britain might not prove able to stimulate population sufficiently for the opportunities.

The heart of Owen's suggestions has, by one critic, been rendered thus:[1]

> Owen proposed to cut the world up into villages of 300 to 2,000 souls, with a preference for 800 to 1,200; that every person should have allotted an area of land varying from half an acre to three times that quantity, according as the particular society was more or less agricultural; that the dwellings for the 200 or 300 families should be placed together in the form of a parallelogram, with common kitchens, eating apartments, schools, and places of worship in the centre. I must add, what many will regard not as details, but as the kernel of the whole system, that individualism was to be disallowed in these villages: that each one was to work for the benefit of all; and that, as a result, all the members would eat at a table and of viands provided by the community. For myself I regard this communism as one of the subordinate parts of the plan, because, until it is proved that by spade husbandry an increased quantity of commodities can be produced, in proportion to the labour employed, it is quite useless to discuss the best mode of distributing the excess.

Despite some of the weaknesses of Owen's plans, indicated, perhaps, sufficiently above, there can be no doubt but that they did much to stimulate the creation of the numerous co-operative societies of the 1820's. The normal co-operative society nearly always began with a trading store but nearly always, too, there was the hope that such a store might quickly be able to set some of the members to work for the society and, ultimately, perhaps, the majority of them, if not all.[2] But there was also a keen desire to make a beginning with a co-operative society that should start in full community from the very outset, and a fair number of wealthy or well-to-do men were willing to help Owen to try out any really promising experiment. Involved financial negotiations resulted, in 1824, in the flotation of the Orbiston Company with a capital of 200 shares of £250 each: 291 acres of the Orbiston estate, nine miles from Glasgow, were acquired and, as the greater part

[1] W. L. Sargant, *Robert Owen and his Social Philosophy*, pp. 171–2.

[2] G. J. Holyoake, *The Co-operative Movement to-day* (1891), p. 19: "These Stores always seemed pitiful in Owen's eyes.... He did not deprecate this form of Co-operation, and did not applaud it."

of the shares issued were taken up there seemed to remain sufficient capital to house and equip a settlement of 200 families prepared to live and work on the co-operative principle. The shareholders restricted their interest demands on the new community to 3½ per cent for the first two years and to 5 per cent afterwards, taking upon themselves, also, the costs of organising the venture. And in March 1825 Abram Combe, as a species of Resident Manager, began with zeal and energy the erection of a great block of permanent buildings partly, perhaps, in the desire of committing the Company irretrievably. In January 1826 matters were far enough forward to permit the first group of Hamilton weavers to be admitted as community members, and during the summer the community numbers rose to nearly three hundred, with "squads" of ten to twenty families working, respectively, in the foundry and workshops, in the market-gardens, on the farm, and in the dairy. Prospects seemed so promising that the community felt able to override Combe's advice, and, during his absence, to abandon the debtor-creditor account he had kept with each tenant on the basis of the work done and the goods consumed by his family. Full communism was declared but the results were so far from satisfactory that, by the spring of 1827, it was admitted that many idlers had had to be dismissed. But considerable claims were still being made of the success of the community, once it had reformed itself, when the disaster of Abram Combe's death overtook it in August 1827. A couple of months later William Combe, Abram's brother, was giving the tenantry notice to quit, and in 1828 furniture and plant were being sold by auction and the great block of buildings, become useless, was left to be demolished, a total loss to the proprietors. If, as has been surmised, the break-up of the community was forced, not by the proprietors but by mortgagees who foreclosed, there was something in the Co-operative complaint that there had been fatal mismanagement.[1]

Owen, who had, of course, had no direct share of responsibility for the failure of Orbiston, had been engaged in another experiment on an even larger scale in America. The tangled story of

[1] W. L. Sargant, *Robert Owen and his Social Philosophy*, pp. 277–96, for a full treatment of the Orbiston experiment based on the *Orbiston Register*, the *Co-operative Magazine* and the private investigation still possible in 1860. He found mention of a mortgage of £16,000 and it seems possible that something like that might have been the amount of shares not taken up.

Owen's thirty thousand acres at New Harmony, Indiana, and the ten communistic societies, most of them unsatisfactory, who had bought or hired land from him there, cannot here be unravelled. But, by 1829, Owen, though still hoping for a great Mexican grant in Texas for the founding of a community on his own terms, was coming to the conclusion that, for community-living of his pattern, the public needed more preparation. Returning to England in 1829 for a variety of private and business reasons, he began some busy years of lecturing and propagandising among the working men of London. The effect was very considerable even though most typical working men combined the desire for community-living with a belief, not altogether to Owen's taste, that till Radical Reform gave them control of Parliament, the political conditions for the introduction of Owen's communities would be lacking. That Owen's thinking, however, persisted upon economic rather than political lines is made obvious by his production of the new scheme of Equitable Banks of (Labour) Exchange in 1832 and of the Grand National Consolidated Trades Union towards the end of 1833.[1] He will hardly be blamed nowadays for fixing his eyes so unwaveringly to the primary importance of production and exchange.

[1] Cf. *The Crisis* (The Owenite weekly), June 16th and 30th of 1832 and October 12th of 1833.

"... he desired to be understood as now giving notice of his determination to present a bill to the house, for the purpose of bettering the condition of their fellow subjects, the negroes, in all the British colonies. That measure would embrace the following distinct objects: First; to make negro evidence admissible in all cases, in all courts ... Secondly; to prevent the use of the whip, as applied to women, entirely; and as a stimulus to labour, whether for men or women: Thirdly; to attach all slaves to the soil, rendering them inseparable from it, in any circumstances: Fourthly; to prohibit persons holding West India property, or any mortgage upon such property, filling any office, civil or military (except regimental) in the West Indies: and lastly; to secure, by such means as might be safe at once to the owner and the slave, the gradual, but, ultimately, the complete admission of that injured class of men, to the blessings of personal liberty (hear). If he (Mr. B.) were alive and in parliament, he would, early next session, move for leave to bring in such a bill. He knew that he should have the zealous support of almost all who were around him [the Opposition]. He trusted that he should have the concurrence of a majority of the house. He was sure he should have with him the great body of the people out of doors."

Henry Brougham in the Commons, June 23, 1825.

A Radical version of Anglo-Indian History (From *The Extraordinary Black Book*, ed. 1831).

"Indian delinquency is of no grovelling kind, it soars far above all precedent of ancient or European turpitude. Faith, justice, and humanity were mere pretexts for rapine and violence. When these would not serve for the spoliation of native powers, imaginary crimes were laid to their charge.... For the calamities inflicted on this devoted region, by avarice and ambition, few compensatory advantages have been rendered. Scarcely a single trace is to be found of the superiority of our civil administration; nor a record of usefulness and generosity. Almost every village in England, attests the former sovereignty of the Romans, by the ruins of some work of power or utility; but the future Hindoo will in vain seek for mementos of our sway, in the bridges we have built, the navigations we have opened, or the highways we have constructed. All former conquerors of Hindustan—the Arabs,

the Tartars, and the Persians left behind them some monument of either state or beneficence; but were we to be driven out of India this day, nothing would remain to tell that it had been possessed, during the inglorious period of our dominion, by anything 'better than the ourang-outang or the tiger'."

WRITING in the *Wealth of Nations* of 1776, Adam Smith had suggested that an agreed political separation of the discontented American colonies from Britain would, if it were possible, benefit Britain considerably. No longer would their defence have to be provided for—mainly from home revenues; and no longer would an unnaturally large capital be diverted, to hold monopolised colonial markets, from markets that were nearer and, in essence, more profitable. And provided the separation were peaceful, a perpetual commercial treaty would almost certainly be accorded the Mother Country on the most advantageous terms while the same feelings of affection and loyalty towards Britain would reign in America as once prevailed in Grecian daughter-cities towards the older cities that had given them birth.[1] How much admirable shrewdness there was in Adam Smith's suggestions came only to be understood in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and it is well, therefore, not to antedate the cry of "Emancipate your Colonies" which arose, first, in the distressful days after Waterloo when Colonies seemed to be providing little but sinecures and expense for an over-burdered metropolis to bear. In fact, from 1783 to 1815, England was busy acquiring a long chain of dozens of new colonies and always for reasons that appeared strong enough, at the time, to defy serious censure. It was, for example, almost an obligation of honour to settle the unfortunate American Loyalists in New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island and Ontario; the most philanthropic spirits in the country induced Ministers to send the "poor blacks", who had helped the British side in America, to Sierra Leone;[2] and the dispatch of the first contingent of convicts to Australia, in 1787, was at least better than allowing them to rot in the hulks. Thus early and inevitably was the worldly wisdom being disregarded which had called, on the loss of the American colonies, for a complete change of Imperial system—for an Empire of trading posts and plantation colonies, protected by a naval supremacy, nurtured on the Navigation Acts, and involving little of the emigration drain which had peopled the immense tracts of America but had prevented the Mother Country from

[1] *Wealth of Nations*, Book IV, Chapter VII, Part III. Adam Smith knew, of course, that his suggestion would not and, for psychological reasons, could not be adopted.

[2] *The Philanthropist* (1814), for the "History of the Colony of Sierra Leone".

keeping the great relative superiority of population necessary to enforce her authority. As one well-known pamphlet had had it:[1]

> Britain hath received a blow; and prudence should point out now what prosperity was before regardless of. Our system of affairs is altered, and therefore new arrangements are become necessary.... Our conquests, and our conduct, in a lost Empire, should inspire us with lessons of wisdom for the preservation of what is left. But no extended possessions should be added to the Empire; no outstretched territorial conquests be undertaken. Such conquests are defeats. They may tend to the aggrandisement of rapacious individuals, but they must work the ruin of the Nation. Ports for protection and refreshment, and settlements for commerce that suit the capacity of Britain, should bound our views. Such settlements, as will not drain the island for support.... Those seeds, that were scattered over distant and inhospitable climates, during that wild period which was under the influence of chimeras of colonization, would have produced much fruit at home. But the storms of America may have dissipated those phantoms.... Britain cannot devote too much attention to her West India Islands. They support navigation by various means of intercourse. But Men of Britain! Watch your Navigation Act; it is the Palladium of your naval power! Those islands strengthen not only the maritime but the internal force of Britain; for they promote industry in the mother country....

A quotation like the above may suggest why it was that, during the Revolutionary War, Pitt made such an exhausting effort to hold Haiti—and why Tobago, St. Lucia, Trinidad and British Guiana ranked, even in 1815, so relatively high among the extensive list of British gains. The centre of British overseas power seemed, for a number of decades, to have passed to the West Indies, and those islands, too, had supplied domestic politics with one of its main bones of contention—Slave Trade Abolition. Though Fox and his friends left the initiative to Wilberforce and the "Saints", these freely admitted their tremendous debt to Opposition's consistent support, offered on the most Radical basis. Clarkson's famous Abolition history, for example, after showing how Fox indignantly turned on Addington and Dundas in the 1792 debates, reported him thus:[2]

> ... he would give his opinion of this (slave) traffic in a few words. He believed it to be impolitic—he knew it to be inhuman—he was

[1] Rev. T. B. Clarke, *The Crisis; or Immediate Concernments of the British Empire* (1784). Dublin edition, 1786.

[2] *The History of the Abolition of the African Slave Trade*, ii, 414–15.

certain it was unjust—he thought it so inhuman and unjust, that, if the colonies could not be cultivated without it, they ought not be to cultivated at all. It would be much better for us to be without them, than not abolish the Slave-trade. . . . He declared, that, whether he should vote in a large minority or a small one, he would never give up the cause. Whether in the House of Parliament or out of it, in whatever situation he might ever be, as long as he had a voice to speak, this question should never be at rest. Believing the trade to be of the nature of crimes and pollutions, which stained the honour of the country, he would never relax his efforts. It was his duty to prevent man from preying upon man; and if he and his friends should die before they had attained their glorious object, he hoped there never would be wanting men alive to their duty, who would continue to labour till the evil should be wholly removed. . . . The West Indians had no right to demand that crimes should be permitted by this country for their advantage; and, if they were wise, they would lend their cordial assistance to such measures, as would bring about, in the shortest possible time, the abolition of this execrable trade.

When discussing Fox's death after he had brought Abolition to triumph in 1806, Clarkson paid a moving tribute to the dead statesman's consistency since promising the Abolitionists his support in 1788.

"He was constant," wrote Clarkson,[1] "in his attendance in Parliament whenever the question was brought forward; and he never failed to exert his powerful eloquence in its favour. The countenance, indeed, which he gave it was of the greatest importance to its welfare; for most of his parliamentary friends, who followed his general political sentiments, patronised it also. By the aid of these, joined to that of the private friends of Mr. Pitt, and of other members, who espoused it without reference to party, it was always so upheld, that after the year 1791 no one of the defeats which it sustained was disgraceful. . . .

"I never heard whether Mr. Fox, when he came into power, made any stipulations with His Majesty on the subject of the Slave-Trade: but this I know, that he determined upon the abolition of it, if it were practicable, as the highest glory of his administration, and as the greatest earthly blessing which it was in the power of the Government to bestow . . . when removed by pain and sickness from the discussion of political subjects, he never forgot this cause . . . 'Two things,' said he, on his deathbed, 'I wish earnestly to see accomplished—peace with Europe, and the abolition of the Slave-trade.' But knowing well, that we could much better protect ourselves against our own external enemies, than this helpless people against their oppressors, he added 'but of the two I wish the latter.'

[1] *Ibid.*, ii, 565 et sqq.

It is not, perhaps, as well known as it might be, how Fox's surviving colleagues, by concentrating in 1807 on the Abolition resolution that Fox had carried in 1806, put Abolition on the Statute Book just before their own fall. It was one of the narrowest margins in history.[1]

After 1815 Colonial debates in Parliament came to take a wholly unexpected turn. The country was in deep distress until 1821, and the subject of Retrenchment in Government Expenditure rose almost to the front place in party strife. Opposition and the "public" girded incessantly at what they considered the indefensibly high figures proposed for the peace-time Army and Navy, and they were not placated when given elaborate statistics of the troops and ships deemed necessary to hold some of Ministers' war-time gains like the Ionian Islands, the Cape, Ceylon and Trinidad. Ministers were suspected of looking for every excuse to keep abundant military and naval patronage in their hands both in the "new" and in the "old" colonies, and one of the reasons openly suggested for their eagerness was, not merely the desire to keep, through patronage, their corrupting control of Parliament, but the more insidious wish to have, at their command, the military means to crush justifiable discontent at home. Even the civil government of colonies "old" and "new" was discovered to be full of lurking dangers for the ordinary Englishman at home. There were hundreds of posts, some of them veritable sinecures, to add, in the first place, to Government's already swollen patronage lists. And, often enough, it turned out that much of the costs of civil government in the colonies, let alone military and naval expenditure, came, in the last resort, to be placed on the already overburdened shoulders of the taxpayer at home. It was Joseph Hume who, by 1821, had become the lynx-eyed Radical expert detecting, amid nation-wide applause, every manner of colonial "job" it was sought to palm off in the national accounts,[2]

[1] Cf. T. Clarkson, *Ibid.*, ii, 579–80: "But though the Bill had now passed both Houses, there was an awful fear throughout the kingdom, lest it should not receive the royal assent before the ministry was dissolved . . . on Wednesday the twenty-fifth [March], at half-past eleven in the morning, His Majesty's message was delivered . . . to deliver up the seals of their offices. . . . It then appeared that a commission for the royal assent to this bill among others had been obtained. . . ."

[2] Cf. *Notes by Sir R. Heron, Bart.*: "1821. During the last Session, a committee of about six Members sat constantly to obtain all the financial information they could. Hume, one of them, used the fruits of their labours in opposing the extravagance of Ministers. He was enthusiastically supported

and he was to become, besides, the defender of the colonists themselves against the "oppression" of Downing Street's military, naval and civil nominees. James Mill was an even more trenchant Radical critic, and in his famous "Colony" article for the *Encyclopædia Britannica Supplement* seems deliberately to have aimed at increasing the feeling in England which should permit what a later generation would have called a "dissolution of the Empire". The Colonial System was maintained, he averred, because "there is not one of the colonies but what augments the number of places —there is not one of them but what requires an additional number of troops, and an additional portion of the navy".[1]

Meanwhile, despite some use of Cape Colony to draw off a "redundancy of population" from Great Britain, Empire sentiment among the "public" was hardly helped by the constant slave scandals reported from the West Indies or the growing realisation of the huge cost imposed upon the home consumer by the great tariff preferences granted to West Indies sugar and the timber of the North American colonies. Even a British admiral like Sir Isaac Coffin saw little but loss in North American colonies which, after costing untold millions for defence in the War of 1812–14, taxed the Mother Country anew by their requirement of high tariffs to raise the cost of Russian and Scandinavian timber heavily in the home markets.[2] And there were others besides the "Saints", now angrily meditating a campaign against Slavery itself, in view of the horrors constantly reported, who were growing tired of the demands of the "West India interest" for some compensation in view of the harm it had allegedly suffered from Slave-Trade Abolition. The compensation demanded for the West India interest always seemed to take forms involving great loss to the British Exchequer, the home consumer or the East Indies

by the nation; and though nothing was carried in the House, it has forced upon Ministers a very considerable reduction in many departments since the prorogation, though very far below the necessities of the country."

[1] *The article "Colony" reprinted from the Supplement to the "Encyclopædia Britannica"*, pp. 31–2.

[2] Cf. *John Bull*, March 17th, reporting Sir Isaac Coffin in Parliament on March 13, 1822: "It would have been a good thing for this country if Canada had been sunk to the bottom of the sea. It cost this country £1,500,000 per annum and did not make a return of 500 pence. The Canadians, by the timber trade, had been in the habit of cheating this country out of £300,000 yearly. This had been done by suffering great quantities of American timber to be sent down by the river St. Lawrence which had been brought to England as Canadian timber. Yet after acting such a part, they now threw themselves on that House for support. The sooner the Governor was called home, and the sooner the Assembly and Colony were suffered to go . . . the better."

sugar-producer in Mauritius and elsewhere who was apparently to resign himself for ever, because able to produce cheaper, to a higher range of duties at the British ports.[1] Once upon a time, of course, it had constituted a sufficient answer to all such critics of the Colonial system as found fault with one or another of its aspects to point out the great counter-advantages Britain enjoyed in its Navigation Act monopolies. But, in 1818, America had begun the retaliation which hurried on such large surrenders of principle after 1823 and, meanwhile, in 1820, came the famous Free Trade Petition of the London Merchants who implied that the whole involved Colonial and Navigation systems merely served to divert, at a tremendous cost to the individual consumer and to national prosperity, the nation's trade and shipping from its natural channels.

That defenders of the "wisdom of our ancestors" had been forced, at least partly, on to the defensive may be instanced from an interesting treatment of Colonial Policy which appeared in the *Quarterly Review* for January 1822. The writer thought it worth while to begin by rebutting such objections to Colonies as that they drained off population, depleted the national capital, and imposed burdens on account of the costs of administration and defence. And the case for the whole Colonial and Navigation systems the writer would put no higher than this—that the exchange, for example, of West India sugar for British manufactures was a perfectly "natural" trade though it was "regulated" in order to give both parties secure markets within the Empire instead of precarious markets, at the mercy of the caprice of foreign governments. Even this case was largely surrendered by Huskisson, in the Colonial Trade Bill of 1825, and, in 1826, the *Parliamentary History and Review* for 1825, an important publication bearing very plain marks of the Radical hand of James Mill, treated Imperial matters thus:[2]

> The avowed object of Mr. Huskisson is a change from a system of reciprocal monopoly, to one of entire freedom of trade: an highly useful and laudable object for a British minister to profess and undertake. . . . But is this the limit of improvement? When all this shall be effected; when the timber of the North of Europe and of Canada shall enter our

[1] *Parliamentary History and Review, 1825*, pp. 632–3: "On West India sugar the duty is 27s. per cwt.; on East India 37s.: the duty on West India coffee is 6d. per lb.; on East India 9d. But this is not all: on the exportation of West India refined sugar not only is the duty returned but an actual bounty is paid."

[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 639–40.

ports on the same terms, and the sugars of the East and of North and South America shall compete in our markets with those of our West India possessions: when the benefit supposed to be derived from the monopoly of the colonial trade shall have been exchanged for the privilege of unrestricted commerce with all the world—what advantages will then be derived, and what evils suffered from the remnant of the colonial system?

The author then proceeded to deal with the great disadvantages, from the point of view of naval and military expense, of retaining dominion over the West Indies and British North America. In the case of the West Indies, he allowed, there was the special factor to consider of the white population "with half a million of slaves at their throats". This called for caution but there was no such need for caution and delay in preparing to invite the North American colonies to assume the full responsibilities of independence.

"It has been computed," he claimed,[1] "that the Canadian provinces alone have already drained this country of between sixty and seventy millions; and when it is considered that this sum has been deducted, year by year, from the income of the British people, forming a tax upon *their* profits, a check to *their* accumulation, and a motive for the transfer of *their* capital to other countries . . . it will be thought strange that this system of waste should have been suffered to exist so long: although, when it is further considered, that the whole of the immense patronage, produced by this annual expenditure is thrown into the hands of the British government, this astonishment will probably subside. . . ."

"Here then is a point for attack. The liberal portion of the ministry have declared for an ultimate free trade with Canada; we say it should be ultimate *emancipation*. The public mind should be familiarized with the idea. We are now paying a heavy tax, in the shape of an artificial price, on the bad timber of that province, and probably half a million a year for the mischievous patronage of appointing its governors, generals, and judges. It is to our advantage to get rid of this burthen, honestly. As much caution, therefore, as may be needful—or, to be on the safe side, even more; but let the burthen be fairly removed. . . . It was well said by Mr. Baring, that 'It was time for government to consider, at what period of maturity they would be fairly and honourably ready to allow these colonies the benefit of a separate system; and whether it would not be wise and dignified for Great Britain to do early and liberally that, which she might be compelled to do in a few years hence in a very different manner.'"

[1] The speech of Mr. Baring quoted here was made in the Commons, in a Canada debate, on March 15, 1825. (Cf. *Hansard's Parliamentary Debates* for the debate on the Upper Canada waste lands.)

The Baring quoted with such approval by the Radical writer was, if anything, a Tory, but a Tory with a keen sense of North American realities and the growing power of the United States. And, in 1830, a leading Whig member, Sir Henry Parnell, went a good deal farther in a startling work on *Financial Reform* which had considerable influence for a number of years since it was based on the large collection of expenditure statistics Sir Henry had amassed as Chairman of an important Finance Committee of the House of Commons. Parnell held that the Empire was a great deal too big, that the mistake of 1763 had been repeated in 1815 and that too much had been annexed, and, finally, that it was urgent that much of Britain's expenditure in the Colonies should be abandoned by surrendering or transferring the sovereignty of a good deal of the Empire. But, perhaps, Parnell's views had better be given in the form in which they were taken over by that "extreme" Radical manual, the *Black Book or the Reformer's Bible*. Here is the *Black Book*'s concluding summary on the colonies:[1]

> Of these colonies, three of them—Ceylon, Mauritius, and the Cape of Good Hope—are only of use to the East India Company, who ought to defray the charges of their military protection. Many other of our colonies are equally valueless as objects of national utility. Of what use is the retention of the Ionian Islands, with Malta and Gibraltar in our hands? The settlement at Sierra Leone and on the West Coast of Africa ought to be abandoned, having entirely failed in the attainment of the object intended. No reason can be shown why Canada, Nova-Scotia, and other possessions on the Continent of America, would not be as available to British enterprise, if they were made independent states. Neither our manufactures, commerce, nor shipping would be injured by such a measure. On the other hand, what has the nation lost by Canada? According to Sir H. Parnell, fifty or sixty millions have been already expended; the annual sum payable out of English taxes is full £600,000 a year; and there has been a plan in progress for two or three years to fortify Canada, at an estimated cost of three millions. Are the boroughmongers mad, or are the people mad, to tolerate their lavish proceedings?

Meanwhile the continuance of West India slavery in the old forms had, since 1815, been becoming steadily more impossible. The slaves were aware both of the self-liberation of the blacks of San Domingo and of the philanthropic interest in their lot taken by the humanitarians of Britain. And a motion, made by Wilberforce in 1815, to prevent roundabout evasions of Slave-Trade Abolition

[1] *The Extraordinary Black Book* (ed. 1831), p. 337.

became, when defeated, one of the themes of the wildest plantation rumour in Barbados and the distant cause of the slave insurrection of 1816, which was not suppressed without the loss of a thousand lives, many of them by execution.[1] Relations between the white community and the "Saints" were not improved either by this bloody suppression or by the growing tendency among the West India whites to blame missionaries, sent to open chapels to Christianise the slaves, for the increasing restlessness among the coloured population. By 1823 there had been sufficient fresh revelations of the "iniquities" of slavery to induce the "Saints" to put themselves at the head of a mighty new agitation for the abolition of slavery itself. This agitation probably surpassed anything witnessed even in the Anti-Slave Trade movement,[2] and the tables of Parliament were so effectively covered with petitions that Ministers quickly promised to forward remedial measures of surprising scope. The attempted resistance of the Jamaica Assembly, the foolish violence used in Barbados against the missionary Shrewsbury, and the sentencing to death, in Demerara, of the missionary Smith, after a slave insurrection, were hardly calculated to abate the zeal of the Anti-Slavery Societies which were now forming and agitating.[3]

As was inevitable, the ear of the English poor was quickly won after there was a really determined and persistent exposure of the unavoidable horrors of West India slavery. When, for example, the Leicester Auxiliary Anti-Slavery Society was formed, and the Rev. Robert Hall, the best-known Dissenting Minister in the town (in virtue of "radical" activity dating back to 1791 and including a nationally "notorious" attack on Pitt in 1793) was asked to pen an Address, these are some of the passages he wrote:[4]

But degrading as slavery is, in its mildest form, that species of it which prevails in our West India colonies is of the very worst description,

[1] *Annual Register*, 1816, History, p. 162: "More than a thousand of these wretches are said already to have lost their lives, and many remained to undergo capital punishment."

[2] One of the pamphlets most circulated was Wilberforce's *Appeal to the Religion, Justice, and Humanity of the Inhabitants of the British Empire, in behalf of the Negro Slaves in the West Indies*. Another was *Negro Slavery; or a View of some of the more prominent features of that State of Society*.

[3] Cf. *Annual Register*, 1823 and 1824, for much of the story.

[4] From *An Address on the State of Slavery in the West India Islands from the Committee of the Leicester Auxiliary Anti-Slavery Society* (1824). For a time, the Liverpool Anti-Slavery Association was the most active of the provincial societies.

far less tolerable than that which subsisted in Greece and Rome during the reign of paganism. It would be difficult to find a parallel to it in any age or nation, with the exception of those unhappy persons who are carried captive by the piratical states of Barbary. Scourged, branded, and sold at the discretion of their masters, the slaves in our West India islands are doomed to a life of incessant toil. . . . They are driven to the field by the cart whip. They are followed by a driver, with this dreadful instrument constantly in his hand, with which he is empowered to inflict, at his own discretion, a certain number of lashes on their backs, with no exception whatever in favour of the softer sex. . . . They are every moment liable to be removed at the will of their masters, to the remotest part of the island, or to be transported into other islands. The ties of kindred are violently torn asunder, and the mother and children often assigned to different purchasers. . . . Nothing was wanting to complete the misery of such a state, except to attach absolute impunity to the atrocities which the unlimited subjection of the weak to the strong is sure to produce; and this is amply provided for by that regulation universally adopted in our colonies, which excludes the testimony of a negro against a white inhabitant. In consequence of this law, the vilest miscreant may inflict whatever cruelties he pleases on the wretched blacks, providing he take care that no white person be present. . . . It is no small aggravation of this system, that its unhappy victims have not been exposed to it as the punishment of crime, but by the violence of ruffians, who, having traversed the ocean in quest of human prey, forcibly tore them from their native shores. . . .

By the time of the General Elections of 1832, there was hardly a hustings in the country where it was safe to resist the cry for Abolition. Nor was it merely gradual Abolition that was now being asked but total and immediate Abolition,[1] and any deviation from this formula was apt to arouse the anger of the "mob".

India

In the *Wealth of Nations* of 1776 Adam Smith had shown himself opposed both to the commercial monopoly and to the territorial government exercised by the East India Company. The commercial monopoly had raised the cost of European goods in India, had reduced the price and quantity of Indian goods bought for export to Europe and had, generally, depressed the level of Indian productivity. And the Company's political sovereignty,

[1] Cf. Henry Richard, *Memoirs of Joseph Sturge*, Chapters 4 and 5, for the conversion of the agitation into a more strenuous and "popular" one, with a staff of hired lecturers, during the course of 1831 and 1832.

oppressively enough exercised on its own account, became a greater plague when misused, in addition, by Company employees, quite out of control from Leadenhall Street, and anxious only to build up great fortunes in the shortest possible time. It was, of course, of Indian wrong that Adam Smith was principally thinking when voicing such opinions but he was, naturally, not unaware that Company monopoly had harmful effects on England too, especially in reducing the vent of British manufactures in the East. His conclusion, in fact, was as hostile as this:[1]

> Such exclusive companies, therefore, are nuisances in every respect; always more or less inconvenient to the countries in which they are established, and destructive to those which have the misfortune to fall under their government.

Adam Smith had written well before he could have had definite knowledge even of the opening part of Governor Hastings's hotly attacked Indian record between 1772 and 1785. But when Philip Francis, Hastings's rival and enemy, left India, in 1780, for England and attached himself to the Opposition, the darker sides of Hastings's régime were certain to be exposed, the more especially as Francis won the ear of Burke and Fox. Burke began his attacks on Hastings in 1782, and in 1783, as a member of the Portland Government, helped Fox to draft and to defend the famous India Bill which would doubtless have meant the beginning of the end of Company rule in India. By the alliance of the King, the City and the Company, the Bill was defeated, Pitt was made Prime Minister and an India Act was carried which left the Company nearly all its powers, though these were now to be exercised under the supervision of a Government Board of Control. The argument by which Fox's India Bill was most decisively defeated seems, undoubtedly, to have been that which pictured the Bill as a mere device to plunder the Company of its great patronage rights, rights which when added to those enjoyed by the Whig aristocracy, then in office, would form the basis of a power strong enough to dictate alike to King and People.[2] The effect of this argument may be

[1] This is the concluding paragraph of the long chapter on Colonies, *Wealth of Nations*, Book IV, Chapter VII.

[2] Cf. Rev. T. B. Clarke, *The Crisis* (ed. 1786), p. 15: "Would it be prudent by a violation of charters, to lay the foundations of an Aristocracy on the ruins of our East-India Company? An Aristocracy is a dangerous engine in any government. . . . The interest of the Directors grows with the interest of the commerce, and perishes with its decay. The interest of the Aristocracy, is, but

judged from the fact that, after 1784, notions of the Government's taking over the direct political control of India from the Company virtually disappeared for sixty years. Even in 1831, when the great Reform agitation was under way and much else at East India House was under criticism, the results of the India Bill debates of 1783 and 1784 were still obvious enough in the general decision not to disturb the patronage settlement of 1784. Here, for example, is the *Extraordinary Black Book*, the "Reformers' Bible" as it was called, on the problem of India appointments:[1]

> Supposing the Company deprived of their territorial authority, by whom could the immense patronage of India be exercised? It was the principle of the India Bills of Mr. Fox to vest the patronage of India in a Board, emanating from parliament and independent of the Crown; but in the present constitution of the House of Commons, this was only adding to the power and emolument of the Aristocracy. Again, to invest India patronage in Ministers would be not less objectionable; it would form an enormous addition to the overwhelming influence of the Crown. The Court of Directors, however, though they have some interests in common with the Oligarchy and executive government, are not directly identified with either; they are a different power, based on different interests; their constituency are neither potwollopers, burgage-holders, nor freeholders—they are proprietors of India Stock. . . . Under this arrangement a diversion of influence is obtained, and the danger to public liberty, which might result from consolidating the patronage of India with that of the United Kingdom, is in some measure averted.
>
> In our opinion, then, the Company ought to retain their political sovereignty, and for this plain reason—we do not see by what other constituted authority their functions could be discharged with less danger to the community.

And the *Extraordinary Black Book* was regarded as one of the most dangerous Ultra-Radical publications in the entire decade before the "Great Reform Bill"![2]

The impeachment of Warren Hastings after his return from India, in 1785, has become one of the best-known episodes in British history. That Pitt, knowing that the King and the Company both regarded Hastings as the "Saviour of India", should yet have permitted, and even aided, the Opposition leaders to

to receive the wages, perhaps of corruption, after having performed the part of a tool, in infringing on the rights and power of the company. . . ."

[1] *The Extraordinary Black Book* (ed. 1831), p. 372.

[2] *Ibid.* (ed. 1831), claimed that the volume had "been often reprinted" since its first publication in 1820.

bring him to impeachment, shows the gravity of the charges brought against the ex-Governor-General.[1] Those charges still affect Britain's reputation for, at the bar of History, it is of no avail to justify acts of wrongdoing on the ground that they helped to maintain Company solvency or to assure Britain's threatened hold on India. But the bulk of British politicians came more and more to justify Hastings after dangerous times arrived with the French Revolution and seemed to teach that extraordinary perils warranted extraordinary counter-measures. He was ultimately acquitted, in 1795, by a great majority in the Lords though there were those who held that the result might have been different if the charges could have been pushed faster and with less elaboration of rhetoric. The acquittal in the Lords did not, in any case, clear Hastings's reputation, for the leading Opposition historian of contemporary politics and the Opposition's *New Annual Register*, too, showed not the slightest intention of accepting the verdict.[2] Hastings remained, indeed, to furnish Ultra-Radicals of the age of the "Great Reform Bill" with their principal example of what Anglo-Indian avarice and tyranny could become at their worst.

For nearly a decade after Warren Hastings's acquittal, Anglo-Indian subjects can hardly be said to have entered into the texture of normal politics in Britain, and even the Marquess Wellesley's aggressive forward policies between 1798 and 1804, blessed as they seemed to be by success, failed to arouse any serious criticism in a country, engrossed by difficulties and dangers nearer home. It was, in fact, not "public opinion", which was hardly interested, but East India Directors, appalled by the rate at which Wellesley's wars and taste for Oriental magnificence were adding to their debts, who insisted on Wellesley's recall, in 1805, after his soaring

[1] Cf. William Belsham's *History of Great Britain*, viii, 114, for Pitt voting against Hastings on the Benares charge (June 13, 1786) and pp. 148–9 for another vote against Hastings on the Begums of Oudh charge (February 1787) when, according to Belsham, he did himself honour by "expressing his detestation of perfidy so vile, of cruelty so remorseless".

[2] Cf. *New Annual Register*, 1796, Domestic Literature, pp. 223–4, when reviewing Major Scott's attacks on William Belsham's *Reign of George III*: "After a calm and unbiassed perusal . . . we lament that we are not enabled to acquit the British government of the East, or its agents, of the foul imputations which have been cast upon it, of injustice and cruelty . . . we are fearful that, after every justificatory and palliating plea which ingenuity may suggest, much too much of evil will be found to have preponderated in the British government of Hindostan." Belsham replied for himself in 1797 in *Remarks on the Observations of Major Scott, relative to the Administration of Warren Hastings.*

ambition had, at length, encountered serious checks in the campaigns against Holkar. Philip Francis, meanwhile, backed by Fox, was attacking Wellesley's warlike record in Parliament in an effort to induce the Directors and "public opinion" to return to the maxim adopted in 1782, at the time of the first attacks on Warren Hastings, the maxims of no aggression and no aggrandisement.[1] Describing Wellesley's continuous pretence of a French danger in India, Francis said:[2]

> After the conquest of the Mysore, it was natural to have expected that the rage for acquisition might have subsided. Lord Wellesley had himself declared that this event "had restored the peace and safety of the British possessions in India on a durable foundation of genuine security". But it was soon discovered that these hopes were fallacious. A formidable French force was said to exist in India; and further exertions and sacrifices became necessary . . . much apprehension was affected to be entertained from the French officers whom Scindia had engaged in his service. . . . Mr. Francis said that he had examined the papers with great accuracy and attention, and could not discover the names, or even any allusion to the names, of more than ten or twelve. . . . It was unnecessary to have resorted to arms for the purpose of removing them; it might have been effected by other means. . . . The Mahratta states had never given any just cause of offence to the British government. During the war with Tippoo they had uniformly observed the strictest neutrality. But . . . lord Wellesley had resolved to reduce them to a state of dependence.

Meanwhile the Anglo-Indian adventurer, James Paull, who had acquired a fortune in Oudh and had come into conflict with Wellesley's policy of reducing that State, too, to complete vassallage, was back in England intent on buying his way into Parliament and settling accounts with Wellesley there. Despite warnings from Francis and others that, where the impeachment of Hastings had failed when undertaken by a powerful band, a one-man impeachment effort by Paull himself was bound to end disastrously, Paull entered Parliament for Newtown in 1805 and continued his pertinacious efforts to expose Wellesley throughout

[1] *New Annual Register*, 1806, gives Francis's motion of April 5, 1805, thus: "That it be declared that this house adheres to the principles established by its unanimous resolution of the 28th of May 1782, adopted by the legislature, and made law by two successive acts of his present majesty, in 1784 and 1793, namely, that to pursue schemes of conquest and extent of dominion in India, are measures repugnant to the wish, the honour, and the policy of this nation." Lord Castlereagh, President of the Board of Control, defeated the motion, despite Fox's support, by 105–46.

[2] *Ibid.*, History, pp. 106–7.

the Session of 1806.[1] Though enjoying some countenance from Francis and not without hope that Fox, now in office, might give him some countenance too, Paull was savagely baited by the Pittites and found that Fox, with many difficulties on his hands, was taking the view that the past could not be undone, not even Pitt's India Act which he had himself so bitterly opposed.[2] Considering the handicaps under which he laboured and the very poor preparation his past career had been for the task of a Burke, Paull must be allowed to have produced a considerable impression. One example must suffice for all. He had been pressed by his opponents to come forward with specific and detailed charges against Wellesley instead of continually asking for masses of official papers. Having found the means to possess himself of a confidential East India House report on the Wellesley régime, very hostile to the Marquess, Paull replied by making the report the basis of his first charges. An extract from a rendering of Paull's indictment of Wellesley, on April 22nd, is well worth giving:[3]

> . . . the said marquis Wellesley, though he was solemnly sworn to obey the instructions of his employers, and do everything in his power . . . to promote and support their just and lawful interests in India; yet, instead of so doing, on his arrival in India he disregarded their authority, disobeyed their instructions, assumed to himself a despotic power, turned his back on the true interests of the company, and did, without their permission, and contrary to their instructions, for the gratification of his own caprice, with the most flagitious profusion, and for corrupt purposes, squander the money of the said company to an enormous extent. The result of this was, that the debt of the company, which on the accession of the marquis Wellesley to the Indian government in 1798 stood at £11,033,648 was on his departure . . . increased to above £31,000,000. That when marquis Wellesley first arrived in India, every part of the company's affairs wore an aspect of prosperity . . . the said marquis Wellesley, by wantonly and profusely increasing the public expenditure, did not only squander

[1] Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 237, reporting Francis declaring on March 17th: "he had discouraged Mr. Paull from proceeding in this business as he was sure he would not meet with support . . . but he thought at the same time that there were sufficient grounds for impeachment against that nobleman. . . ."

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 237: "Mr. Fox observed, that when a bad system of government prevailed, the best mode of remedying this was not, in general, by impeaching an individual. The object was to remove the person who carried on such a system, and to take care that none such should be acted upon in future; and this being obtained, it might often be inexpedient to carry the matter any further. . . ."

[3] *Ibid.*, pp. 246–7.

all the ordinary means in his hands, but all the additional money he was able to raise by loans and additional taxes, supporting a wanton and profuse style of living, unparalleled in the case of any former chief governor . . . giving large salaries to his friends and favourites . . . the erection of a college at Fort William, without the authority of the company, which cost £181,689 . . . an unnecessary journey to the upper provinces . . . the whole charge £30,000. There was a charge also of £220,000 for the erecting and fitting up a palace for the residence of the marquis, which was decorated in a style of splendour unparalleled even among eastern princes. There was a charge for a house and garden for the noble marquis at Bhurtpore, £15,000. Besides all this, there was a charge for reviving a body-guard of cavalry . . . it was maintained, for the first five years, at an annual expense of £40,800; and for the whole period, . . . £240,000. . . .

Paull went on, with charges based on Wellesley's treatment of Oudh, and, altogether, by the end of the Session, he had so infuriated Wellesley's fellow-Pittites and so disturbed Lord Grenville that every seat that Paull might have bargained for in a new Parliament was put out of his reach. There were even those who suggested that Parliament was dissolved in October 1806 for the deliberate purpose of suppressing Paull, whose attacks on Wellesley had certainly provided Napoleon with curious matter on the way that Britain, the alleged champion of the weaker governments of Europe, treated the weaker governments of India. With the help of Sir Francis Burdett and Cobbett, however, Paull was launched as the "popular" candidate for Westminster, and it took the utmost efforts of Whigs and Pittites combined to prevent his return.[1] The voting figures were—Admiral Hood, 5478: Sheridan, 4758: Paull, 4481, but more revealing will be found such comments as those of the *New Annual Register*, an organ hardly biased in favour of Paull like *Cobbett's Weekly Political Register*. According to the *New Annual Register*:[2]

The fortitude and perseverance which had been exhibited by Mr. Paull, in the house of commons, in his attempt to bring the marquis Wellesley before the tribunal of his country, in which he was frequently impeded by the most indecorous and reprehensible opposition of many members, had procured him an extraordinary portion of popular favour. All that intrigue, ridicule, or scurrility could accomplish was unfortunately deemed requisite by the advocates of Mr. Sheridan, to

[1] *Cobbett's Weekly Political Register* for 1806 has a great deal of matter on Paull and the Westminster Election of 1806.

[2] *New Annual Register*, 1806, History, p. 352.

stem this tide of popularity; and by the most vulgar abuse, the influence of authority, and the junction of interests between sir S. Hood and Mr. Sheridan, their election was finally carried.

The new Parliament itself was, however, destined to have but a short life and, in April 1807, Paull and Burdett were nominated as the "popular" candidates for Westminster at a new General Election. Then came a disastrous misunderstanding between them, a duel followed in which both were wounded, Paull severely, and Paull's rashness and precipitancy were successfully blamed for the whole affair. He failed, therefore, to accompany Burdett into Parliament and, despite almost fanatical efforts to bring Wellesley to justice, he was driven to suicide during 1808 by the overwhelming expenses his short political career had entailed.[1] It was a sad story and would, doubtless, be regarded in India as merely the first example of the typical "fickleness" of the "popular" British constituency in regard to Anglo-Indian oppression, directly the first charm of novelty and scandal had worn off. Certainly, the next considerable manifestations on India were very different from Paull's. The "Saints" began an energetic campaign to force the Company's hand in regard to the missionary work, practically banned hitherto by East India House as likely to cause native suspicion and unrest. And "independent merchants", especially those at "outports", long resentful of the Company's almost exclusive use of London, began an agitation for the end of the Company's trade monopoly, promising the country, if they were permitted, vastly to increase the flow of British exports to India.[2] Both agitations had a considerable measure of success when the Company's Charter was renewed in 1813. The "Saints" received the satisfaction of having a tiny Anglican Establishment quartered on the revenues of the Company, and the appearance of missionaries, too, became certain under the clauses which allowed the Board of Control to licence their presence if the Directors declined to do so. Commercial men, too, in some numbers, with an attendant sprinkling from the professions, might be expected

[1] Cf. *Proceedings of the late Westminster Election* (1808), p. 276, for some of Paull's electoral exertions from a sick-bed. One of his last written efforts must have been *A Letter from Mr. Paull to Samuel Whitbread, Esq., M.P.* (1808), pp. 34.

[2] The title of one Free Trade pamphlet was as exciting as this: *The Happy Era to One Hundred Millions of the Human Race: or the Merchant, Manufacturer and Englishmen's Right to an Unlimited Trade with India.*

under the same clauses and those other clauses which ended the Company's monopoly of the Anglo-Indian trade, though not of the trade with China. For the first time, a British community of some size, and economically independent of the Company, might be expected in India, and some provision had to be made for the withdrawal of licences of residence from those considered guilty of "abusing" them. There was here the material for some very pretty disputes between the unofficial white community and the Company, and the shout of "liberty" was certain to be raised and lustily re-echoed in Britain.

In 1825, during the course of Parliamentary debates on the only expulsion notorious enough to pass into history, some information was supplied on the size of the independent white community, legally resident under the Company. Since 1814 there had been 963 applications for licences, and the Directors had accorded 743, and the Board of Control 41, leaving 179 as the number of complete refusals.[1] It was common knowledge, of course, that numbers of British subjects were living in India, without licence, and that this made their position, in face of the Company, a good deal more precarious. Joseph Hume, an ex-employee of the Company, long resident in India, and now the most accredited Radical in the House, had been driven to take the whole matter up when James Silk Buckingham, founder of the successful daily, *The Calcutta Journal*, had been expelled from India in 1823 and his profitable paper ruined after some sharp exchanges with the officially approved *John Bull* of India. The Acting Governor-General responsible was Adam, and when Lord Amherst appeared on the scene and approved the new curb on the Press that was affecting Ram-Mohun-Roy's native publications as well as the British journals, Hume declared war on Amherst for abandoning the more liberal courses of his predecessor, Lord Hastings. New material for attack on Amherst soon came from the Burmese hostilities with which he associated himself, but even before then Hume had been strong enough. Here is one report of Hume's speaking of February 24th:[2]

Under the government of Mr. Adam and Lord Amherst, many persons who had been settled in India, in a prosperous trade, had their

[1] *Parliamentary History and Review, 1825*, p. 335, reporting the President of the Board of Control, Wynn, in answer to Hume.
[2] *Ibid.*

prospects entirely ruined by being sent out of the country . . . he would assert that the effect of the general practice was, that no person in any of the presidencies durst express his opinions, if those opinions should be hostile to the Government . . . Governor Adam . . . Lord Amherst . . . had enacted such restrictions on the press in general, that a general gloom was cast over the public mind in that country; and the fear of deportation was so prevalent, that no man dared express his real sentiments. . . . A war was now raging in India, and yet the English public knew scarcely anything about it. . . . It had lately been the fashion to say, that the British possessions in India hung by a thread. This he denied. While we maintained an army of 250,000 men in that country, it was impossible that we should lose our possessions there. But the best way to ensure the permanence of our power, would be to allow the exposure of delinquencies by the press. If that were prevented, mischiefs of the most serious nature would ensue. He concluded by moving for "a return, showing the number of British-born and other European subjects removed from any of our presidencies in India by order of the local governments, or by direction of the Company here, stating the cause of such removal . . . the return to include the names of all persons so banished from the year 1784. . . .

Before long Hume was advancing to the attack on Amherst once more, this time for having allowed a shabby and unnecessary little border dispute with the Burmese authorities in Arakan to result in a major war, costing millions and accompanied by misfortunes and heavy losses.[1] And when a "reform" writer, who may be judged to have been in contact with James Mill at East India House, excused Amherst on the Arakan dispute by affirming that it was actual Burmese aggression on the Manipur side that made war inevitable, he, too, found reason to blame Amherst for having allowed what might have been a mere frontier war to develop into a large-scale contest. The Burmese, he held, might have been given a sharp lesson on the Arakan and Manipur frontiers without the over-ambitious expedition against Rangoon, which had cost millions, involved heavy mortality and driven the Burmese Court to extremities.[2] By the third year of the Burmese War, of course,

[1] Cf. *Hansard's Parliamentary Debates*, March 24th and March 29th.

[2] *Parliamentary History and Review, 1825*, p. 661: "The expense of this expedition, from the union of land and naval armaments, and the large proportion of European troops, was beyond anything before known in India. . . . This expense was absolutely thrown away during six months of the rainy season. . . . Then the rain, the bad quarters, and insufficient supplies, produced extreme unhealthiness, and a great mortality ensued. The very means of defence at home being crippled, in order to send out this expedition, the enemy were invited to attempt our frontier, where a disaster was experienced, most alarming to the safety of our Indian empire. . . ."

sufficient resources had been mobilised to fight a way, even against the greatest natural difficulties, into the heart of the Burmese Empire. A humiliating peace was forced upon the Burmese Court, large coastal territories were annexed, and Amherst, despite deficiencies obvious to all with knowledge of the true facts, was allowed to spend the last years of his Governorship as Earl Amherst. By the time his successor, Lord William Bentinck, arrived in 1828 important new forces were astir. Bentinck obviously came with the intention of signalising himself not by war but by improvements, and his abolition of Suttee in 1829 was certainly a courageous beginning.[1] And, meanwhile, thought was already being given to the fact that the Company's Charter had run over fifteen of its twenty years and that the time for pressing "reforms" was at hand.

This chapter may well be concluded by an examination of the "reforms" demanded in the Radicals' *Extraordinary Black Book* issued early in 1831. They required freedom of the Press in India; perfect freedom for British subjects to settle in India and to move about in the interior;[2] and, then, freedom from the restrictions on the "enterprise" of British subjects still maintained by the Company. Though it was urged that the "native population" also suffered from the lack of these freedoms, the view-point of the "independent" British community in India obviously predominated in the minds of those responsible for such demands. And that impression is confirmed by noting that the one species of British "enterprise", banned by the Company, which came in for specific notice, was landowning and leaseholding, a very dangerous "enterprise", indeed, from the point of view of native India and, in any case, just being thrown open for the white indigo-planter, prepared to work on lease, as another Bentinck "reform".

But the main demand on which British "reformers" were concentrating, in preparation for the debates on Charter renewal,

[1] Even in 1826 the "reforming" *Parliamentary History and Review* (for 1825), pp. 664–5, had maintained that the Company was doing all that could be expected when sending police-officers to make certain that the widow was not going to self-immolation as the result of "compulsion". And it continued, "it may fairly be asked, whether those members of the House whose imagination seems so deeply affected, by this distant, irremediable, and comparatively small amount of suffering, might not employ their time and faculties better, by attempting to remove the causes of misery . . . in their own country".

[2] *The Extraordinary Black Book* (ed. 1831), p. 373, defined the existing system thus: "It is also enacted that no British subject shall reside in the interior, at a greater distance than ten miles from the presidencies, without a certificate of leave."

was the end of the Company's monopoly of the China trade. British exports to China, it was held, were only a fraction of what they should be, and just as British exportation to India was greatly increased after Company monopoly was ended under the 1813 Charter, so would it be if the 1833 Charter ended the China monopoly. It was, however, the Company's importation from China that supplied an even greater grievance. Its cumbrous handling of its tea-import monopoly, and its alleged reliance on its tea-profits as the only resource, left by its war extravagances, to pay dividends had made the price of tea in Britain outrageously high. The Company's territorial revenues, it appeared, were all absorbed by the expenses of government and by the payment of interest on its swollen war-debts; its non-monopoly enterprises seemed to show very little net profit; and so the entire burden of providing high dividends on its six millions of capital stock, rated so high on the Stock Exchange, was thrown on the British tea drinker. And here are some of the concluding observations of the "Reformers' Bible":[1]

> For years we have been paying double the prices we ought to pay; double the prices that are paid on the Continent and America; where there are no privileged associations. . . . Why, in addition, to our other burdens, should we be made to pay two millions per annum for the benefit of the Company? We are becoming a sober people—a tea-drinking nation, and why should this improvement in national character be obstructed by over-grown monopolists? The reason is this: The finances of the Company are embarrassed. . . .
>
> Here is the gist of the matter at issue between the Company and the public. The question is not the policy of a *free-trade* with China; on this point no well-informed person can entertain a doubt; the interests of commerce, the interests of the people at large, and of the public revenue of the country would all be promoted by free trade; but then how are the Company's dividend, the interest of their bond debt, and other out-goings to be paid? They have no surplus territorial revenue; the profits of the TEA-TRADE are their sole dependence. This is the rub! But what it may be asked, have the community to do with the pecuniary difficulties of a knot of intriguing, ambitious, and improvident speculators? What is India to England? Some thousands of adventurers have amassed princely fortunes there by rapine and extortion, and have returned to spend them in this country, to add to the aristocracy of wealth already too predominant. Beyond this we have derived no advantage from our eastern acquisitions—neither true glory nor national happiness. Why should we then be called upon to make a

[1] *Ibid.*, pp. 374–5.

sacrifice? If the Company cannot maintain their association without public support; if they cannot carry on trade to advantage, without privileges hurtful to the community . . . let them DISSOLVE. . . .

There is, however, one resource to the Company, in lieu of the profits of the exclusive trade—they may RETRENCH. . . . They must reduce still further than they have yet done their military, civil, judicial, and revenue establishments; they must curtail enormous salaries . . . be less lavish in granting pensions. . . . And if all this is not enough, they must, instead of bartering offices and appointments in India for the benefit of themselves, sell them openly and fairly to meet their expenditure. . . .

The "Reformers' Bible" did not, however, consider that it would prove necessary to resort to means so drastic as the last. After printing a list of the Military Charges, the General Civil Charges and the Judicial Charges in each of the three Presidencies, it concluded that, from retrenching "such lavish outgoings", the Company would be able to find resources to replace the monopoly profits on tea. The British Radical, in short, was so incensed by the high price of tea in Britain that he omitted, in his contentions, even the pretence of taking thought, also, for the welfare of the Company's Indian subjects.

CHAPTER XXVII

SOME TRADE SOCIETIES

"The disposition to a system of combined operations first manifested itself in the neighbourhood of the town of Nottingham.... A new machine had been invented, by which the manufacturers were enabled to avail themselves of the assistance of women, for work in which men had before been employed.... It is probable that the bands of rioters, who first took the field, consisted of persons who had actually been thrown out of employment by the improvements of machinery: and their operations were, in the first instance, confined to the destruction of frames, owned or worked by those who were willing to labour at reduced prices.... The spirit of disorder rapidly spread ... inflammatory placards, inviting the people to tumults, were dispersed, illegal oaths were administered, riots were excited in various places...."

The *York Castle Calendar* (1831) describes the origin of Luddism in the winter of 1811–12.

"The number of coopers in London is said to have been 1,500, of whom 700 were enrolled in a benefit society, called *The Friends of Humanity*. There was a separate fund to support men out of employment, whether from strikes or from any other cause.... Though there were no secret oaths, declarations, and subscriptions, there were other rules than those printed ... on which only evasive answers ... could be obtained by the committee.

"With regard to apprentices ... an employer stated that 'by their (the workmen's) regulations ... they had so reduced the number of workmen, that the masters were completely in their power.... They would not suffer any one to be taken apprentice but a cooper's son' ... it was said that members of the Society would not suffer men from the country to work with them.... For the last twenty years there were continual disputes, not always issuing in strikes ... about wages, in which the men invariably carried their point."

Trades' Societies and Strikes summarises evidence on the Coopers offered to the Commons' Combination Committee of 1825.

"I, A.B., do voluntarily swear, in the awful presence of Almighty God, and before these witnesses, that I will execute with zeal and alacrity, as far as in me lies, every task and

injunction which the majority of my brethren shall impose upon me in furtherance of our common welfare; as the chastisement of knobs, the assassination of oppressive and tyrannical masters, or the demolition of shops that shall be deemed incorrigible, and also that I will cheerfully contribute to the support of such of my brethren as shall lose their work in consequence of their exertions against tyranny, or renounce it in resistance to a reduction of wages; and I do further swear, that I will never divulge the above obligation, unless I shall have been duly authorised and appointed to administer the same to persons making application for admission, or to persons constrained to become members of our fraternity."

A Scottish combination oath quoted by Wallace, Master of the Mint, in Parliament, June 27, 1825 (*Parliamentary History and Review, 1825*).

IN an examination made of the "Occurrences" section of the *New Annual Register* for each of the five years from 1785 to 1789, it was attempted to ascertain what might be the "trade conspiracies" of the time to which contemporaries were inclined to pay particular attention. It was a disappointing enterprise for, though there was plenty of evidence of brisk trade, the "conspiracies" specifically noted, during the five years, amounted but to two. The first, moreover, dated at August 1785, turned out to be an alleged conspiracy of ship-owners, coal-factors and other "Gentlemen of the Coal Trade" to refuse to unload their coal in London. They were only brought to reason, it appears, by strong measures, the City procuring a Government offer of £200 reward for information as to the instigators, and the Lord Mayor threatening to begin prosecutions.[1] The affair was, doubtless, an incident in the long tug-of-war as to coal prices that went on, for generations, between the London consumer and the organised "Gentlemen of the Coal Trade", banded on the Tyne and Wear, and offers altogether less information on workmen's combinations than the serious affair of the Glasgow weavers, reported in the summer of 1787. Here is an account of the business which, like most of the printed reports of trade disputes to be found at this time, completely ignores the operatives' opinion of the unnecessary violence and bloodshed employed against them:[2]

For some time past the operative weavers have been in very bad humour respecting the reduction of their wages upon some kinds of work. This forenoon numbers of them assembled, and cut several webs out of the looms of those persons who had agreed to work at the reduced prices. The magistrates met and sent the town officers to seize the perpetrators, but finding themselves too weak, they returned. The magistrates then went along with them.... The magistrates remonstrated with the weavers, who, instead of listening ... pelted them with vollies of stones.... It was then found necessary to call for the aid of the military.... The military were ordered to draw up at the Cross.... The magistrates then came out, and caused the riot

[1] Cf. *New Annual Register*, 1785, Principal Occurrences, p. 85, for the notice served in the Lord Mayor's name on "the coal-owners, factors, and all others concerned in the coal trade, that unless the ships now in the river begin to unload their cargoes without farther delay, his lordship is prepared ... to cause all persons to be brought to that punishment which the common and statute laws of the realm have prepared for those who enter into combinations to obstruct the sale of that necessary commodity, and enhance the price thereof".

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 40, under September 4, 1787.

act to be read to an immense multitude who were now assembled. The soldiers then were ordered to the Gallowgate, where the principal body of the weavers were . . . a scuffle ensued, upon which the soldiers were commanded to fire, which they did, and killed four or five persons, and wounded several. After this a number were taken prisoners and lodged in gaol. *The persons killed were interred a few days after, without any disturbance, the wisdom and firmness of the magistrates having restored tranquillity to the city.*

Those must, indeed, have been "wise" magistrates who handled a trade dispute so firmly that four or five persons were killed, a number of others wounded, and still more lodged in the city gaol! One of the weavers, James Granger, charged with being active in the Combination, was not sentenced in the Edinburgh High Court until July 25, 1788, and, then, the sentence pronounced was: "that the prisoner should be carried back to the Tolbooth of Edinburgh, therein to remain till Wednesday the 13th day of August next, on which day he should be publicly whipt through the streets of the city by the hands of the common executioner; that he should then be set at liberty, and be allowed till the 14th of October to settle his affairs; after which he should banish himself from Scotland for seven years, under the usual certifications in case of his again returning during that period".[1] Yet Granger was a man whose character "till those unhappy disturbances took place" was publicly praised by the Judges.

It is pleasant to leave the cruel and ignorant incomprehension of the "public" and its Press for a glimpse into the inner activities of a combination. Graham Wallas once called Place's story of the strike of some two hundred and fifty leather breeches makers, in London, from March to May 1793, "the earliest existing account of a strike written from the inside", and it is certainly a most revealing document from many aspects.[2] After serving an apprenticeship, Francis Place became a journeyman breeches-maker in 1789, at the age of eighteen. A year or so later he joined the Breeches Makers' Benefit Society which offered, indeed, sick and funeral benefits but was, also, under that specious exterior, gathering funds to try and force better conditions in that badly-paid trade. Place married in 1791, became a father in 1792 and, meanwhile, was beginning to make his way into stuff breeches

[1] *New Annual Register*, 1788, Principal Occurrences, pp. 31–2.

[2] Cf. Graham Wallas, *Life of Francis Place*, pp. 2–10, for a most important set of quotations from the Place Manuscripts.

making which he found distinctly more remunerative than leather breeches making, a declining trade with too much time lost waiting about the master's premises for work. Place's new work was done at home, his wife helping, and he only learned that his Society, having gathered £250, had called a strike when a master to whom he was taking back finished breeches, would give him no more work. The masters had decided that leather breeches makers engaged on stuff breeches were to be dismissed in order to prevent them from helping the rest from their wages.

Driven into the strike, Place soon showed himself the longest head in the trade. Some of the strikers were induced by an offer of seven shillings down, from the strike funds, to go on the "tramp" into the provinces where the local societies could at least be trusted to provide a day's keep, a night's lodging, and something for the next day, to any one bringing a Society certificate whom they could not introduce to work. And Place carried the notion of offering those who stayed in London, not the seven shillings a week strike pay originally intended, but the chance of earning nine shillings a week making up "Rag Fair Breeches" for the Society in a shop to be managed by Place at twelve shillings a week. By the sale of these breeches, the strike was prolonged considerably, and Place was a marked man when the victorious masters received their journeymen's surrender. It was agreed, among the masters, that he was never to be re-employed in the trade, and for eight months he failed to obtain work of any kind, living, meanwhile, in the wretchedest manner and pawning nearly everything he had. But work was obtained at last, thanks to the advent of a "busy time", and Place succeeded in lifting himself out of the Slough of Despond into which he had fallen. He was, however, the last man likely to get special favours from the masters, and soon the amount of work sent to him began declining again until he was finally discharged once more. This time his brother breeches-makers employed him to reorganise their Society in the guise of a Tontine Sick Club with himself as Secretary, and in 1795 they succeeded in obtaining, without a struggle, the conditions that they had vainly sought two years before. The Club was thereupon dissolved and its funds shared out, but Place, now an earnest member of the London Corresponding Society,[1] was well enough known among Westminster's Trade Clubs to be able

[1] Add. MSS. 27813, f. 114, for Place in the Chair on August 27, 1795.

to make a living by redrafting Club Rules, acting as Club Secretary to several different Clubs, and distributing their Club notices. But he was already beginning to feel his way towards setting up a tailor's shop on his own account, and, doubtless, his cautious dropping away, during 1796, from prominent office in the London Corresponding Society and his abandonment of the Society altogether, during 1797, when he found some of its members playing with treason, released more of his energies for the building up of a business. And while some of his more incautious intimates were swept into gaol, in April 1798, and kept there, under Habeas Corpus Suspension, for three years, Place was taking his first steps to affluence. In April 1799, with a fellow-workman as partner, he opened a tailor's shop at No. 29 Charing Cross, and after less than two years the business had thirty-six men employed. Meanwhile he abandoned politics completely from the conviction that until he had established himself solidly he could be of little essential use. By the time he was drawn in again by "plumping" for Paull at the General Election of 1806, he was master of a flourishing business.

While Place had been meditating and executing his entry into commerce, a great new peril had overtaken the Trade Clubs which he had served and was still to serve so well. Of course, they had always been operated under constant danger from the law. But the "Conspiracy" Statute of Edward VI was hardly enforceable any longer,[1] and common law "conspiracy" prosecutions involved expense and trouble enough for masters to make them wish for a "remedy" quicker and more summary than a prosecution, before a jury, at Quarter Sessions or Assizes. Of course, a very summary "remedy", applicable, too, against a "conspiracy" that was merely hatching, meant, even by eighteenth-century legal standards, a great reduction in the maximum penalty, but this seemed to matter the less since, for really "serious" cases, the masters might still avail themselves of the full "conspiracy" procedure. And so, in 1720, an important precedent had been set when, on the application of the Master-Tailors of London and Westminster,

[1] The 2 & 3 Ed. VI, cap. 15, *Touching Victuallers and Handicraftsmen*: "If any butchers, brewers, bakers, poulterers, cooks, oystermongers, or fruiterers, shall conspire, covenant, or make oath, that they will not sell their victuals but at certain prices; or if any artificers, workmen, or labourers, shall conspire . . . that they will not work but at a certain rate of price . . . or shall do but a certain work in a day, or shall not work but at certain hours and times . . . each offender shall . . . forfeit for the first offence £10 . . . and if not shall be imprisoned 21 days with bread and water. . . ."

Parliament tried to break up a remarkable combination of Journeymen Tailors, attempting both an advance of wages and a shortening of hours. A Statute was drafted "regulating" wages and hours in the trade, and, at the same time, the Journeymen's Combination was declared illegal.[1] Continued adhesion, sworn to by one witness before two Justices, was punishable by two months hard labour.[2] There are, of course, the best of reasons for believing that no Combination was ever killed in this way but merely driven underground and, certainly, when Parliament tried a new scheme of regulation in 1768, the Preamble complained of "many subtle devices having been practised in order to evade" the effects of the Act. But the mere fact that the new Act provided for much higher rates of pay than those of 1720 and also for the ending of work an hour sooner in the evening must, doubtless, be taken as pretty good evidence of what Tailors' Combinations had achieved in the meantime, whether by evading or defying the law. In 1768 it was even considered necessary to threaten masters consenting to pay more than the new legal maximum with imprisonment alongside the men successful in obtaining it. And two Justices, sitting together, were empowered, upon information received of such illegal bargaining, to summon the parties concerned and to require all proper witnesses to give evidence against their masters if need were, on pain of committal to gaol for refusal.[3]

Workmen's combinations became particularly suspect to the authorities after a British democratic movement arose during the years following the French Revolution. Certainly, on the occasion of a serious Papermakers' dispute in 1796, the summary inquisitorial and imprisonment powers, allowed to two Justices by the Tailors' Acts of 1720 and 1768, were conferred on a single Justice, without even the slightest legal security being taken that the Justice

[1] 7 Geo. I, cap. 13, *An Act for Regulating the Journeymen Taylors within the weekly Bills of Mortality*.

[2] 12 Geo. I, cap. 34, against Weavers' and Woolcombers' Combinations, raised the maximum period of incarceration, in their case, to three months. But "great Violences and Outrages" were complained of in the Preamble.

[3] 8 Geo. III, cap. 17. *An Act to amend an Act made in the Seventh Year of King George the First, intituled, An Act for regulating the Journeymen Taylors within the Weekly Bills of Mortality* (in Ruffhead's *Statutes at Large*). Under the inquisitorial clause (Clause III), the imprisonment for declining to answer the Justices' questions might apparently be perpetual for the refusers were to stay in the House of Correction, where conditions were severer than in the gaols, "until he or she shall submit to be examined and to give Testimony as aforesaid". Yet it was one of the boasts of English jurisprudence that an accused person could not be compelled to give evidence against himself.

should have no interest in or relationship to the dispute. As the Papermakers' Act of 1796 became the model originally suggested for a "general" Act, suppressing all combinations in every trade, its general tone becomes of interest. Here is a shortened version of the three most essential clauses of the Act "to Prevent unlawful combinations of workmen employed in the paper manufactory":[1]

> Every journeyman paper-maker who shall enter into any combination to raise such wages, or alter the hours and duration of work . . . or who shall, by giving money or other means, directly or indirectly, solicit, intimidate, or endeavour to prevent any unhired journeyman or other person wanting employment . . . from hiring himself to any paper manufacturer, or shall by any means, solicit, intimidate, influence, prevail, or attempt to prevail on any journeyman paper-maker . . . to quit his service, or shall proscribe or prevent, or attempt so to do, any master or mistress . . . from employing whomsoever he or she shall think proper . . . or being employed, shall refuse to work with any person . . . and shall be thereof convicted on the oath of one witness, before one justice of the peace for the district . . . shall be committed to the house of correction . . . to be kept to hard labour for not exceeding two calendar months.
>
> Every person . . . who shall attend any meeting or combination by this act declared illegal, or shall summons . . . any journeyman paper-maker . . . to attend such unlawful meeting . . . or who shall collect . . . any sum . . . for any such purposes, or who shall persuade, entice, or intimidate any such journeyman or person to enter into or be concerned in any such meeting . . . or to turn out against or quit the service of his master or mistress, and any person who shall . . . enter into any subscription for or towards the encouragement of any such illegal meeting . . . and is thereof convicted before one justice of peace . . . on oath of one witness shall be committed to the house of correction or common gaol . . . for not exceeding two calendar months.
>
> On complaint made on oath to any justice of the peace of any offence against this act . . . if any person so summoned to appear as a witness shall not appear . . . such justice may issue his warrant . . . for the commitment of such person to some prison of the county . . . there to remain till he shall submit to be examined as a witness. . . .

The drafters of the Act had obviously been given very full information, by the masters, of the methods used by "combinations" of the men. That is, perhaps, why the masters' combinations, so stressed by Adam Smith, were left wholly out of account and why, too, the suppression of journeymen's combinations was treated

[1] 36 Geo. III, cap. 111, in Tyrwhitt and Tyndale's *Digest of the Public General Statutes*, ii, 1202.

as a matter of such urgency, when they arose, that a single Justice of the Peace was given summary powers, liable to the gravest abuse. Abuse was the more likely in that appeal against the Justice's sentence—if, indeed, the accused were ever informed of the possibility of appeal to Quarter Sessions—involved the production of two sureties in £20 each and the risk of having to spend an extra two months in gaol.[1]

The Hammonds in their famous work on the *Town Labourer, 1760–1832* have made notorious the story of how the general Combination Act of 1799 came to be based on just the dubious principles outlined above. The Master Millwrights of London and twenty-five miles around, faced, as they claimed, by a formidable confederacy of their workmen, asked the Commons, on April 5, 1799, to receive a petition from them for a Bill to prohibit combinations in their trade, though the time fixed for receiving petitions had gone by. The petition recited the familiar story of "frequent conspiracies", a new wages demand which would raise all prices in the trade, and a varied strike strategy, supported by strike pay from a "general fund". The troubles of prosecuting until a summary anti-combination law should be granted them were thus feelingly described by the master-millwrights:[2]

> ... the only Method of punishing such Delinquents, under the existing Laws, is by preferring an Indictment, at the Sessions or Assizes, after the Commission of the Offence, but before that Time arrives, the Offenders frequently remove into different Parts of the Country, so that, even if their Places of Residence should be discovered, it would be a long Time before they could be brought to Trial, and the Expence of apprehending, and bringing them back, by *Habeas*, to the Place where the Offence was committed, is so heavy to the Masters, whose Businesses have been stopped by the Desertion of the Journeymen, that (aware of these Difficulties) the Journeymen carry on their Combinations with Boldness and Impunity.

Parliament accepted the Master Millwrights' account and, despite two petitions from the men who also succeeded in interesting Sir Francis Burdett and Mr. Benjamin Hobhouse, a Bill to suppress combination among Journeymen Millwrights was passed through the Commons and ready for passage through the Lords

[1] If they should not be able to meet the defending Justice's costs should his brother-Justices, at Quarter Sessions, uphold him.

[2] *Town Labourer, 1760–1832*, p. 116, quoting from the *House of Commons Journal*, April 5, 1799.

when, as late in the Session as June 17th, the Prime Minister announced a "general" Bill against Workmen's Combinations, which, of course, made the Millwrights' Combination Bill unnecessary.[1] Pitt had, indeed, been asked for a "general" Bill during the proceedings on the Millwrights' Bill, but the Hammonds have surmised that his final resolve to produce such a measure and to hurry it through Parliament, in the closing weeks of the Session, was due to alarm at the news that a new weavers' combination was active in the North.

Pitt was imprudent enough to write into his "general" anti-Combination Bill the extraordinarily inequitable provisions which had somehow been slipped through Parliament, during 1796, in the case of the Papermakers. Haste, too, was necessary to write the Bill on to the Statute Book before Parliament was prorogued. Accordingly, one Justice, on the evidence of one witness, and without the slightest security for the Justice's own disinterestedness, received the power of summarily condemning a workman, deemed guilty of "directly or indirectly" aiding a workman's combination, to three months in gaol or two months, at hard labour, in the House of Correction. This was too much for the conscientious member, even of that day, once he began to understand, from the flood of workmen's petitions that flowed in during the following Session, the full enormity of the measure to which he had been committed, an enormity which only Hobhouse in the Commons and Holland in the Lords had perceived at first sight. The two Liverpool members were induced to take charge of an amending Bill, and with the help of Sheridan, who had declared that "a more intolerable mass of injustice had never been entered on the Statute Book" than the 1799 Act, considerable improvements were made against the wishes of Pitt and his Law Officers.[2] By the amending Act of 1800, it needed two Justices to convict instead of one; the Justices had to have no interest in the dispute; the

[1] *Calendar of the Journals of the House of Lords, 1509–1808*, p. 475, has the following under Bills: "To prevent unlawful Combinations of Workmen employed in the Millwright Business, brought from the Commons and read the first Time. . . . Petition of several Persons, being Journeymen Millwrights, praying to be heard against the said Bill, was presented and read . . . 24th June. . . . Also, a Petition, praying that the said Bill may pass into a Law, etc., 1st July. Ordered that the said Bill be read the second time on this day three Months, 11th July 1799."

[2] *The Town Labourer*, p. 125. The Hammonds' view was based on Parliamentary Reports in the *Parliamentary Register*, *The Times*, the *Morning Post* and the *True Briton*.

conviction had to be for aiding a combination "wilfully and maliciously" instead of "directly or indirectly"; masters, too, could be prosecuted for covenanting to reduce wages or increase hours; and, finally, arbitration procedure was provided for cases in dispute.[1] The arbitration procedure was adapted from an Act just passed to meet those involved pricing troubles in the Cotton Weaving trade which had apparently provoked Pitt to pass the Combination Act of 1799 and which must now, in the view of some masters at least, have proved completely untreatable by such methods.

Thanks to the amendments of 1800, the Combination Act era from 1799 to 1824 was never as oppressive for "Labour" as has sometimes been represented. Sheridan might have failed to confer a specific legality upon the "Benefit Clubs" of the "Trades" but there is plenty of evidence to show that they continued to exist, in great numbers, and to organise demands for wage increases and even to promote strikes whenever they deemed the occasion suitable. In many trades, especially among strongly entrenched handicraft groups, relatively unthreatened by machinery and able to maintain strict apprenticeship qualifications, the masters themselves found it useful to keep touch with the Clubs. And masters, inclined to threaten or to resort to a combination prosecution, soon learned that there was no more infallible way to breed bad blood in an industry. The notorious prosecution of London printers in 1810, for example, was repented of so thoroughly that the masters undertook, in the course of another dispute in 1816, never to have recourse to such measures again.[2] The Knaresborough Linen Weaving trade possibly showed a very average amount of striking and use of the Combination Act, and here the reported facts for the period 1800–24 are these. Three workmen were sentenced to three months' imprisonment for combination in 1805, but a twelve weeks' strike in 1815 and another of similar length in 1816, both against "reductions", were fought without a recourse to the Combination Laws. In 1823 the men resisted another "reduction" with peculiar obstinacy, striking for twenty-eight weeks, and on this occasion the masters published an abstract of the

[1] 39 & 40 Geo. III, cap. 106, replacing the 39 Geo. III, cap. 81.

[2] *Trades' Societies and Strikes* (1860), p. 353, thus summarises the evidence presented on the printing trade to the Combination Select Committee of 1824: "Among the printers a much healthier and more cordial feeling prevailed [than among the tailors]. This was due to the fact of the masters having stated to the men in 1816 that they had come to the determination under no circumstances to avail themselves of the Combination Laws.

Combination Laws "as a warning".[1] Knaresborough conditions, then, hardly seem to have been extravagantly tyrannical, and the same impression arises from examining other evidence offered to Parliament in 1824 and 1825. Nobody, for example, seems to have claimed to have been more aggrieved by harsh misuse of the Combination Laws than the Boot and Shoe Makers of London and Westminster.[2] Yet it transpired that they had four associations active in the Metropolis, the men's bootmakers of Westminster, the City men's bootmakers, the women's bootmakers of the West End and the women's bootmakers of the East End. And these associations were in correspondence with seventy or eighty others in different parts of the country.

Many of the most envenomed disputes of the period 1800–24 did not turn on wage increases, demanded by the men because of increased costs of living, or wage reductions, demanded by the masters because of "bad trade". The most notorious trade troubles of this period, the armed "outrages" in the Midlands and Yorkshire known as "Luddism" turned on operatives' objections to increased or improved machinery which, they feared, might throw them out of employment. Midland "Luddism" was met in 1812 by making frame-smashing a capital crime,[3] and later in the same session came the Act making the typical Yorkshire "outrages" capital crimes.[4] Three executions at York on January 8, 1813, and fourteen more on January 16th pressed the lesson home.[5] For a time, even the administration of unlawful oaths became a capital crime, and such dreadful harshness in the law was justified by the allegedly peculiar ferocity of the oath administered to members of Luddite combinations. The oath, as produced by informers, ran as follows:[6]

I, . . . , of my own free will and A coard declare and solemly sware that I will never reveal to aney person or persons aney thing that may

[1] *Trades' Societies and Strikes* (ed. 1860), p. 360, for the evidence offered to Parliament in 1824.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 354, for one instance quoted to Parliament and summarised thus: "In one case . . . an employer called nineteen of his men together, detained them under pretence of sending out for beer, and sent for twenty-four officers to take them into custody. They were sentenced to a month's imprisonment and a fine of £1 1*s.* 0*d.* each."

[3] 52 Geo. III, cap. 16.

[4] 52 Geo. III, cap. 130. For the more effectual punishment of persons destroying the properties of H.M.'s subjects.

[5] *York Castle Calendar* (ed. W. L. Rede, 1831), Section Luddites.

[6] *Ibid.*, p. 466.

lead to discovery of the same Either in or by word sign or action as may lead to aney Discovery under the penelty of being sent out of this world by the first Brether that may meet me. Furthermore I do sware that I will punish by Death any Trater, or Traters should aney arise up amongst us, I will persue with unceacing vengence should he fly to the verge of Statude. I will be gust true sober and faithful in all my dealings with all my brothers so help God to keep this my oath invoilated Amen.

But even the hanging judges of 1813 contrived to find cause why they should not hang, but transport, the six men found guilty, at York Castle, of having administered Luddite oaths.[1]

Even more constant a cause of embitterment in industry than the introduction of new machinery was the introduction, by the employers, of a disproportionately high number of apprentices or of journeymen who had "not served their time" in the trade. The men naturally feared the swamping of their craft if the old limitations on entry were swept away, and, in this matter, the older handicrafts at least, had the letter of the law on their side in the shape of the Elizabethan Statute of Apprentices. Combinations, too, to enforce or support the law, to prosecute masters, and to petition Parliament were numerous. Here is one account of a long, patient and disciplined effort made by the Scottish weavers, under Glasgow leadership, to improve their lot at a time when they were being hard hit, not only by masters' methods, but by the "Continental System" and by American retaliation to the Orders in Council:[2]

The Scotch weavers in 1809 applied to Parliament, in conjunction with those of Lancashire, for a bill to limit the number of apprentices, and fix a term of apprenticeship. In 1811, they made a similar attempt alone, and in both cases committees of the House of Commons were appointed, and gave the matter careful attention; but the application was rejected, though Mr. Whitbread gave his support to the movement. Upon this failure the operatives turned their attention to certain old laws empowering the justices of the peace to fix the rates of wages. They called upon the Sheriff of Lanarkshire, in conjunction with the magistrates of Glasgow, to call a meeting of the trade for the purpose

[1] Cf. *York Castle Calendar*, Trial of John Eadon; Trial of John Baines the Elder, John Baines the Younger, William Blakeborough, Charles Milne, George Duckworth, and Zachariah Baines (a Boy). The Boy was discharged, and the crime of the others was treated as having taken place before it was made capital.

[2] *Trades' Societies and Strikes*, p. 356, summarising the evidence offered to the Combination Select Committee of 1824.

of appointing two committees, one of masters and one of men, who were accordingly appointed, and after many discussions came to no result, the masters refusing to recognize in any way the principle of fixing wages.

The operatives then had recourse to proceedings under some old Acts of Parliament.... The masters disputed both the relevancy of the Acts, and competency of the Court; but finally both were affirmed by the Court of Session, to whom appeal was made, and the case was remitted to the Quarter Session.... One hundred and thirty witnesses were examined, besides the masters and workmen of ten other trades ... whose wages ranging from a *minimum* of 12s. per week, up to 25s. per week, gave an average of 18s. 4½d. A statement was at last come to, giving 13s. 9d. per week as an average, the *maximum* being 28s. 6d., and the *minimum* 8s. The masters refused to bring any counter evidence, and eventually repudiated the decision of the justices ... the decision (being) merely declaratory and not binding. The action continued from January 1812, to November, on the 10th of which the final decision was given; and a week after, about 30,000 looms struck in one day, and 10,000 followed soon after. The men were out six weeks. The strike appears to have been extremely peaceable, except that a few webs were destroyed ... and parts of some of the looms were concealed.... The authorities interfered, and prosecuted the leaders of the strike, in consequence of which, as the operatives believed, they were obliged to give in.

The formidable and well-led Glasgow movement had appealed to the Scottish Statutes which, like the English Statute of Apprentices, conferred wage-fixing powers on Quarter Sessions. That is, doubtless, the reason why Parliament decided to repeal the wage-fixing clauses of the Statute of Apprentices in 1813 before they could be made the justification for further industrial unrest and further combination.[1] And in 1814, Parliament went further and repealed those clauses of the Statute of Apprentices which still made it a legal offence to work in many trades without having served a trade apprenticeship and made it an offence, too, to set other people to work who were not qualified by such apprenticeship.[2]

It is doubtful if the abolition of compulsory apprenticeship could have been carried solely on the commercial argument of the wisdom of leaving the employing manufacturer free to train his labour in his own way. A very vital part in carrying it was played

[1] 53 Geo. III, cap. 40, repealed the wage-fixing provisions of the 5 Eliz., cap. 4 (Statute of Apprentices), the 1 J. I., cap. 6, and the Scottish Acts, 22 Parl. J. 6 and 1 Parl. C. 2 (Anent Justices of Peace and Constables).

[2] 54 Geo. III, cap. 96.

by the argument that it was both cruel and illiberal to prevent people from turning to a trade, which they might both desire and need to practice, because of the apprenticeship bar. Even the benevolent Samuel Romilly saw, not the struggling "trades" using apprenticeship as a bar against a flood of entries which would debase their pay and conditions, but rather the industrious and gifted individual, shut out from a handicraft by a, perhaps, purely technical lack of qualification, and driven to the workhouse or to the emigrant ship. Of course, the trades fought hard for the Statute of Apprentices both in 1814 and afterwards.[1] And if they failed to keep it on the Statute Book or to replace it there after its removal, they certainly succeeded in maintaining, in many branches of British industry, the same apprenticeship rules after 1814 as before. The greatest grievance of the London Master Printers was, for example, the strict limits set by their men on the entry of apprentices.[2] The four to five hundred Dublin carpenters "in society", again, allowed no master more than three apprentices who had apparently to be taken from among the sons, brothers or nephews of those in the trade. And, finally, in a number of industries in which there had never been a traditional apprenticeship, expanding industries like coal-mining and new industries like power-spinning, the strongest feelings were liable to be called out amongst the men if there was an attempt, on the part of employers, to break a men's combination by bringing in labour from outside. The Commons' Combination Committee of 1825 was given some interesting evidence, dating back to 1817, of an Ayrshire Colliers' Association which demanded £7 from any adult newcomer, introduced by the masters, whose father had not been a collier. It was a kind of composition to the men's Association. And as for power-spinners, the Combination Committee of 1824 heard a good deal of the terroristic methods used by the highly-paid Glasgow men to keep control of their trade—threatening letters, vitriol throwing, pistol shooting and arson. When printed rules for the Glasgow Spinners' Association were at last obtainable, it transpired that entry into the trade was restricted by a regulation that

[1] Bland, Brown and Tawney, *English Economic History, Select Documents*, pp. 577–91. The men's fight opened with petitions signed by 13,000 journeymen and 800 masters in London and 17,517 journeymen and 1154 masters in the country. Many more petitions came in later.

[2] *Trades' Societies and Strikes*, p. 353: "In this trade more soreness existed on the masters' side from the limitation of apprentices than from disputes about wages."

bound every member of the Association to train none but such as were sons or brothers of Association members and had first served as piecers.[1]

Another "Labour" question with a long record of making trouble in industry was that of "truck", and during serious disputes in the coal and iron trades of Wales and the Midlands, consequent on the employers' efforts of 1816 to impose the "reductions" allegedly necessitated by "bad trade", even the local Magistrates were impressed by the need of doing something in the matter. Some most misleading figures had been issued to the "public" as to the high wages and constant work open to the men, and such vital facts had been left out of the account as pay reckonings, four weeks in arrear, and the men, meanwhile, forced to ask for credit in employers' "tommy shops" selling everything at enhanced prices.[2] It was, indeed, to the Magistrates' action that the two anti-truck Acts of 1817 are to be ascribed.[3] By these Acts, the scope of anti-truck legislation, in various industries, dating back to George I, was extended to cover coal-mining and also the manufacture of steel, steel and iron combined, and plated and other cutlery articles. In these industries, too, employers were no longer allowed to pay their men in goods, or by truck, but only in the lawful money of the realm and, when an amending Act was passed in the following year to permit of payment in bank-notes also, that was only to be "where (his) workmen shall freely consent and be willing to accept the same in payment of their wages, and not otherwise".[4]

Truck, however, when driven out at the door, has always had an awkward habit of reappearing by the window, and in 1820 a third Act had to be passed to prevent workmen being dictated to in the expenditure of their money wages.[5] The Act was passed, in the first instance, as a temporary one, and the evils against which it was directed can be guessed at from the following shortened form of the Statute's operative words:[6]

[1] *Trades' Societies and Strikes*, pp. 355–8, for a short summary of the evidence offered to the Combination Committee of 1824 on the mysterious terrorism exercised at Glasgow; pp. 396–7, for an abstract of the rules as laid before the Combination Committee of 1838.

[2] *The Town Labourer*'s handling of the Home Office records in H.O. 42.154 and H.O. 42.159 is not easy to challenge (pp. 67 et sqq.).

[3] 57 Geo. III, cap. 115, for the steel, etc., industries and 57 Geo. III, cap. 122, for the coal industry.

[4] 58 Geo. III, cap. 51.

[5] 1 Geo. IV, cap. 93.

[6] Tyrwhitt and Tyndale's *Digest of the Public General Statutes* (1822), i, 504.

If any person or persons concerned in the employment of workmen in the descriptions above mentioned shall make or impose, or cause to be made or imposed any restriction, stipulation, or agreement, either directly or indirectly, as to the place or manner of laying out the whole or any part of any wages, money, or bank notes agreed to be paid to any such workmen, or as to the persons with whom the same or any part thereof shall be laid out, or shall in any way do anything contrary to the said acts, as respects the payment or receipt of wages, every such offender being thereof lawfully convicted shall pay . . . not less than £10 nor more than £20 . . . together with full costs of conviction.

It seems that the Act was evaded, to some extent, by the employers who were apparently able to convince some of the Magistrates that a full compliance with the Act and a full provision of coin at isolated collieries and iron-works was next to impossible. They even convinced the magistrates that "Tommy tickets" were popular and, when new troubles came in 1821, the Magistrates decided to treat the men's alleged truck grievances as negligible and a mere cover for making trouble.[1] Fortunately, if truck practices continued for a long time, often in the guise of wage-advance notes, usable before pay-day in shops working with the management, the Statute continued also which, sooner or later, spelled their doom.

The Webbs and the Hammonds have made so well known the story of how the Combination Law Repeal of 1824 was engineered that there is the more justification for considering that there is no need for a recapitulation here. With the great outbreak of strikes, some accompanied by violence, that followed, the Ministers awoke to the magnitude of what they had done, and the older High Tory section, headed by Liverpool and Eldon, would doubtless have liked a large restoration in 1825 of what had been repealed in 1824.[2] But the time had gone by for that, especially with Huskisson at the Board of Trade, and combinations, both among masters and men, had to be left at liberty to organise trade demands and demonstrations free, if there was no violence or intimidation, from statutory prohibition or penalty. But such combinations were no longer expressly freed from the possibility of a "conspiracy"

[1] *Town Labourer*, pp. 68–71, using H.O. 40.17.

[2] After both Liverpool and Eldon had confessed that they had been unaware of the nature of the Combination Law Repeal of 1824 or they would have opposed it, Lord Darnley "expressed his surprise that the Lord Chancellor and his Majesty's Prime Minister should have been so ignorant on the subject of a bill . . . and that bill so important a one" (*Parliamentary History and Review, 1825*, under July 4th).

prosecution; the prohibited "violence or intimidation" was now widened to include the "molestation or obstruction" of employers, non-unionists, and non-strikers; the maximum penalty, awardable by one Justice of the Peace, was increased from two months' to three months' hard labour; one witness, instead of two, sufficed as evidence; and less elaborate precautions were taken in assuring workmen of the complete impartiality of the convicting Justice or Justices. Under the 1824 Act the Justice or Justices convicting were not to be masters in *any* trade or manufacture, nor the fathers or sons of masters. But under the 1825 modification, the stipulation was merely that they should not be masters in the trade in which the dispute had occurred.[1] These downward modifications of workmen's freedom were considerable but the essentials were kept, thanks largely, once more, to Hume in Parliament and Place outside. How Hume fought, with Place as his mentor, and with occasional aid from Denman, Burdett, Hobhouse, and Sir Robert Wilson, may be illustrated from his action at the closing stages of the 1825 Bill. Determined opposition from Hume at the Report stage on June 29th produced an offer of two amendments from the Attorney-General next day when the Third Reading was debated. Some objections from Denman produced a further offer, and a considerably appeased Hume rose to record his appreciation but to insist that there were still the greatest objections to creating offences of such uncertain import as "molesting" and "obstructing", and that to allow Master Hatters, who were Justices, to convict on the complaint of Master Shoemakers, was not the way to make journeymen feel secure of an impartial tribunal. Before the Bill was finally sent to the Lords, Hume rose to make a not undignified closing speech. He appealed to Ministers to listen, in future, not merely to the complaints of masters but to those of men hitherto unjustly oppressed. He trusted that Magistrates would exercise great care before convicting on a word so dubious as "molestation". And he begged the men to submit to the modifications of 1824 Repeal just passed, seeing that if they submitted and were oppressed, they would be certain to receive the sympathy of the public.[2]

A Combination, referred to with some asperity during other

[1] 6 Geo. IV, cap. 109. The 1824 Act was the 5 Geo. IV, cap. 95, *An Act to repeal the Laws relative to the Combination of Workmen; and for other purposes.*

[2] *Hansard's Parliamentary Debates*, June 29 and 30, 1825, does not report fully.

proceedings of the 1825 Session, was the Grand Union of Operative Spinners. These men were charged, among other things, with creating all the agitation that was facing Parliament with the demand for a third Factory Act which, on the humanitarian pretence of saving children from overwork, was meant to prevent the mills from being operated for more than eleven hours a day, a restriction that would mean great loss for Britain and involve, besides, the total dismissal of the unfortunate children.[1] It was Hobhouse, who was leading the case for a new Act to supplement those of 1802 and 1819, and after masters had openly admitted that the 1819 Act was being largely and safely ignored, because Magistrates had not been supplied with adequate powers to summon witnesses, it was certain that Ministers would have to give him an Act of some kind. Hobhouse had hoped to have the Act include, not merely adequate enforcement powers, but a reduction of the permitted working hours of children between 9 and 16 from twelve hours per day to eleven. He was pretty forceful on the kind of medical evidence that had been tendered on behalf of the employers' case for keeping the children on the existing basis. According to him:[2]

> The children in these mills, with the exception of those employed by the member for Preston, and a few others, were now worked twelve hours and a half in the day; and for three or four days in the week were not allowed to leave the mills to take their meals, which they were obliged to take off the floor. . . . Their skins were like parchment, and they scarcely looked like human beings. With regard to the medical evidence that had been furnished before a committee, and on which some gentlemen had relied as proving that 72 hours' labour during the week, or 12 hours per day, was not too much for a child; what weight could the house attach to the testimony of witnesses, of whom, one being asked whether he thought a child could keep standing, without prejudice to her health, on her legs, for 23 hours successively, had answered "That may be a matter of doubt!" and of whom another being asked whether the being pent up in a temperature of 80 degrees, and inhaling the flough or the flew of the cotton, would not prove injurious to the lungs and the health of the children, replied "that they might expectorate it."

[1] Cf. *Hansard's Parliamentary Debates*, May 16 and 31, 1825, for the Second Reading and Committee stages. It was at the Committee stage that Huskisson and Philips, the cotton-master, referred angrily to the alleged machinations of the Operative Spinners.

[2] *Parliamentary History and Review* (of 1825), pp. 441–2. Its abbreviation is more convenient to quote than *Hansard*.

Hobhouse was successful in winning for the Cotton Factory children some reduction of hours though not the amount he had aimed at. Instead of the 11-hour day, six days a week, he had proposed, he finally consented to take a 12-hour day for five days and a 9-hour day on Saturdays. Ministers' consent on this part of the Act was a grudging one, and Hobhouse doubtless owed something to the "Saints" and their Sabbatarian hopes that an earlier end of work on Saturdays would allow for more preparation for the Sunday.

The Operative Cotton Spinners, who had been criticised in Parliament both during the Combination and the Factory business of 1825, were not disliked for nothing. The Combination Select Committees of 1824 and 1825 had each heard of the "horrible outrages" by which the Glasgow Cotton Spinners had sought to defend their grip on the trade.[1] And it had been the Manchester Cotton Spinners who, at the end of a failing strike in the summer of 1818, had attempted to set up a General Union of Trades, pledged to regular consultation through accredited delegates and to mutual support in the event of approved strikes.[2] Though the attempts to launch the General Union failed both in Manchester and London, the Home Office Papers make it obvious that the Cotton Spinners' activities had been under observation,[3] and, certainly, during the 1825 Combination debates, nothing aroused Ministers' ire more than the various "Unions" that had been formed to operate through delegates because they covered a wide extent of territory and embraced many groups of workpeople.[4]

[1] Cf. *Trades Societies' and Strikes* summary of the 1825 evidence: "In Glasgow, since 1822, and before the passing of Mr. Hume's Act, there were four cases of throwing vitriol, frightfully injuring and deforming the sufferers. . . . There were four cases of attempted assassination before Mr. Hume's Act, and three subsequently, all within four or five months. The most remarkable of these was that of John Kean, who, with some others, was hired for £100 to assassinate John Graham and four masters by the Committee of the Cotton Spinners' Union of Glasgow."

[2] *The Town Labourer*, pp. 309–10, for the rules as reproduced on a handbill in the Home Office papers. (H.O. 42.179.)

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 311.

[4] Cf. Huskisson, March 29, 1825 (*Parliamentary History and Review*): "The associations had their delegates, their presidents, their committees of management. . . . One of the regulations provided that 'the delegates from all the different works should assemble at one and the same place' on certain stated occasions; thus forming a systematic union of the workmen of different trades, and a delegation from each to a central meeting. . . . Thus there was established, as against the employers, a formal system of delegation. . . . Another regulation was to this effect. . . . 'The delegates are elected for six months, and may be re-elected'. . . . But the real meaning and intentions of these

The Manchester Cotton Spinners made "Trades" history again by their remarkable six months strike in 1829 and by their effort to set up, at its close, the "Grand General Union of Spinners" intended to league all the spinners of England, Scotland and Ireland. Nor was this all they did to ensure that the defeat of their strike would not be permanent. They returned to the plan of a General Union of Trades for mutual support, and in 1830 launched the National Association for the Protection of Labour. Existing Societies were offered membership on paying an entrance fee of £1, and 1*s.* per member, and afterwards the charge was 1*d.* per member per week. Another striking innovation was the launching of a weekly in connection with the Association, the *United Trades Co-operative Journal*, which became the 7*d. Voice of the People* when payment of the Newspaper Stamp Duty was insisted upon by the Revenue authorities. It is obvious that the Spinners had ambitious and energetic leadership, and this came largely from John Doherty, who was credited by one Home Office correspondent with receiving £600 per annum.[1] But the whole scale of activities, aimed at in the National Association, was beyond the financial and administrative reach of the "Trades" of that day, and the more especially as the bulk of adhering Societies must have joined in the expectation of an early strike in their trade. It was, of course, all very well desiring more certain and regular financial assistance from outside than had hitherto been obtainable by making appeals to other Societies. But a first essential was the building up of a powerful Dispute Fund in the hands of the National Association, and for this years of patience and long-suffering were called for. The patience and long-suffering were lacking, and the National Association had but a short life as did, indeed, the Grand General Union of Spinners. The real chances of a General Union of Trades may well be judged from the failure of even the Operative Spinners of Manchester and Glasgow to maintain, between themselves, for any length of time, organic links more solid than a fraternal correspondence.

But if the larger ambitions of the Operative Spinners were

societies, were shewn in another article, which declared that 'It is the duty of these delegates, first, to point out the masters they dislike (hear, hear): Secondly to warn such masters . . . and thirdly to try everything which prudence might dictate to put them out of the trade'."

[1] Doherty told something of his story and that of the Association to the Combination Select Committee of 1838. Cf. *Parliamentary Papers, Session 1837–1838*, vol. viii.

proved vain, during the course of 1830 and 1831, their agitation on Factory Hours, which had already helped, in the past, to produce the Factory Acts of 1819 and 1825, was yielding yet another Act and promising more. The Hobhouse Act of 1831 holds no special place, perhaps, in the long scroll of Factory Acts because it was so narrowly confined to cotton mills worked by steam.[1] But in that confined class, regarded as specially unhealthy for the young, protection was to be given up to the then surprising age of twenty-one. Till they reached this age, the employees could not be worked at night nor more than twelve hours a day and sixty-nine hours a week. And for better security, masters were required to keep a register of the time when the machinery was operating. But the Operative Spinners were already calling for more. They desired a "Ten Hour Bill" under which machinery would only have been allowed to operate, on a normal working-day, for ten hours of the twenty-four. That, they claimed, was the only effective safeguard for the factory children who would otherwise always be overworked. The enemies of the Spinners were later to charge them with affecting a hypocritical interest in the welfare of the very children who, as piecers, were being overworked by the Spinners themselves.[2] The Spinners' answer was, in effect, that their hearts bled for the children, often their own sons and daughters, but that, driven as they were, they had no other resource till the law was changed. There was doubtless some sincerity in the Spinners' plea but not perfect frankness. The humanitarian "public" was left largely ignorant of the fact that the Operative Spinners' real ambitions were to limit "over-production" and to reduce their own working-day to ten hours.

[1] 1 & 2 Will. IV, cap. 39.
[2] Cf. *Character, Object, and Effects of Trades' Unions*, pp. 28–9.

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    (*b*) Queen Caroline, 1820–1.

(*c*) Anti-Cobbett efforts in the publication of *Blagdon's Weekly Political Register* (1809–11), the *Anti-Cobbett* (1817) and *Cobbett's Penny Trash* (1831).

(*d*) Miscellaneous Pamphlets and Caricatures of the Reigns of George III, George IV and William IV, sometimes with manuscript notes.

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ALREADY ESTABLISHED IN 1786

Gentleman's Magazine. Monthly founded in 1731; reporting always reliable.

Monthly Review. Founded in 1749 and continued to 1845.

Critical Review. Monthly founded in 1756. Usually more orthodox in religion and politics than the *Monthly.*

Annual Register. Founded in 1758 and long under Burke's influence.

New Annual Register. 1780–1825 and long associated with Opposition.

ESTABLISHED AFTER 1786

Analytical Review. 1788–99. Oppositionist Monthly.

Times. New name (1788) for *Daily Universal Register,* founded 1785.

Anthologia Hibernica. 1793–4. A deserving Dublin Monthly.

Pig's Meat. 1793–5. Spence's penny Weekly for the "swinish multitude".

Tribune. 1795–6. John Thelwall's issue.

Monthly Magazine. From February 1796.

Anti-Jacobin. 1797–8. Successful anti-revolutionary Weekly.

Anti-Jacobin Review. 1798–1821. Took over the succession as Monthly.

Porcupine. 1800–2. Cobbett's anti-revolutionary Daily.

Weekly Political Register. 1802–35. Cobbett's new venture after leaving the *Porcupine.*

Edinburgh Review. Founded October 1802 and became the Whig Quarterly.

Examiner. Founded 1808 and soon a leading Oppositionist Weekly.

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Philanthropist. Issued 1811–17 as Quarterly to help "Schools for all", Frugality Banks, opposition to Slavery, etc. etc.

Westmorland Advertiser and Kendal Chronicle. Representative provincial Weekly, founded in 1811 and turning to Opposition in 1817.

Pamphleteer. 1813–28. Four to five volumes of pamphlet-successes issued annually.

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Penny Papers for the People. Henry Hetherington's famous new venture, founded in October 1830, and later renamed the *Poor Man's Guardian.*
Prompter. Carlile's new threepenny Weekly, founded in November 1830.
Republican. Hetherington's halfpenny Weekly, founded in March 1831 as the cheapest of a new Ultra-Radical brood.

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CORRIGENDA FOR ENGLISH RADICALISM, 1762–1785: THE ORIGINS

p. 18, l. 2: *For* "two" *read* "three"
p. 42, l. 1: *For* "suspicions" *read* "suspicious"
p. 58, l. 14: *For* "on the previous day" *read* "some days before"
p. 58, n.4, l. 1: *For* "12th" *read* "10th"
p. 63, l. 7: Omit "early in August"
p. 133, l. 19: *For* "next" *read* "that"
p. 154, l. 10: *For* "9th" *read* "6th"
p. 154, l. 11: *For* "next day" *read* "soon after"
p. 225, l. 3: Put mark for Note 1 above "Hailey"
p. 248, l. 2: *For* "1775" *read* "1774"
p. 470, l. 6–7: *For* "was still writing tracts of the same anti-prelatical or inspiring temper" *read* "was still writing or inspiring tracts of the same anti-prelatical temper"

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